

**Understanding bullying in primary school:  
Listening to children's voices**

**By**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Faculty of Health & Medical Sciences**

**University of Surrey**

**2007**

## SUMMARY

The broad aim of this programme of research was to engage children meaningfully as active participants in the process in order to explore their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices.

After conducting an exploratory study ( $n = 46$ ), three studies were conducted using qualitative methods (interviews, focus group discussions) combined with structured research activities.

Participants, aged 10 to 11 years, were drawn from two primary schools in south-west London ( $n = 66$ ). Semi-structured interviews were conducted using pictorial vignettes depicting a hypothetical story of peer bullying (adapted from the Scripted-Cartoon Narrative of Bullying; Almeida, del Barrio et al., 2001), followed one term later by focus group discussions combined with a brainstorming activity. An activity session was conducted in the summer term.

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and the voice-centred relational method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The results regarding emotional attributions and moral reasoning in relation to school bullying indicated that children attributed negative emotions (worry, shame) to the followers, as well as the victims. Positive emotions were attributed to the bully. Seeking social support emerged as the preferred style of coping, with the majority of participants stating that in the event of being bullied they would tell an adult. Furthermore, the results indicated children's



complex understanding of school bullying in terms of the nature of interpersonal relationships and peer group processes.

Despite some methodological limitations, a number of the findings are novel and these results in particular provide opportunities for future researchers to explore further children's understanding of bullying in primary school. The findings also have important implications for school-based interventions to address bullying. It may be prudent for interventions to focus on fostering emotionally healthy interpersonal relationships that include components such as understanding moral values, understanding emotional states and strategies for building empathy. It is apparent that researchers and practitioners need to take into account the perspectives of children if anti-bullying work is to be effective.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the following people for their part in the preparation of this thesis:

Professor Helen Cowie for her enthusiasm, support and guidance.

Professor Ian Robbins and Dr Diane Bray for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.

Dr Julie Shaughnessy for her generous insights and thought-provoking conversation.

Mike Hawkins, Tim Machin and Martin Evans for their technical expertise. Also, Enid Tubbs, Kathy Ward and Janice Jarmain for their administrative support.

My family, especially Flora, Alex and Dave for their acceptance and understanding.

Tony for his patience, support and understanding.

My friends, in particular, Barbara, Alison, Lynn, Caroline and Phil.

Lauren Doss for the drawings, Maggie Turner for copies of the ChildLine leaflet, George Varnava for copies of *Checkpoints* and John Birdsall Photography for the loan of images for my upgrade presentation.

All the children and schools who participated.

## CHAPTER 1

### Literature Review

#### *1.1 Overview*

Since its launch in 1986, ChildLine has helped to provide confidential advice and protection to nearly two million children and young people (2005). For the ninth consecutive year, in the period April 2004 to March 2005, bullying was the single most common reason for children and young people to call the helpline; of 140,000 calls, 23% were regarding bullying. When the recently appointed Children's Commissioner for England held a competition in 2006 inviting children and young people to advise him of what was most important to them, bullying attracted the largest single number of on-line responses than any other issue (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2006). These figures suggest that, when given the opportunity, children and young people mention bullying as their main cause for concern.

The cost of school bullying is high, both in terms of the negative consequences to the pupil, and in terms of the impact on the school staff and school community as a whole. From the pupil's perspective, there is ample evidence that illustrates the possible detrimental effects of bullying and other aggressive behaviour upon schoolchildren (e.g., Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Rigby, 2003a). In their meta-analysis of twenty years' research, Hawker and Boulton (2000) found that victimization was most strongly associated with depression, and moderately associated with loneliness, and social and global self-esteem. Bullies are more likely to experience social-



psychological adjustment problems such as depression, loneliness and social isolation (Coie & Dodge, 1998; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995) and are at increased risk of bullying and offending as adults (Farrington, 1995; Olweus, 1991). Indeed, recent research suggests that engagement in school bullying is part of a more general violent and aggressive behaviour pattern. Specifically, bullying in school is strongly linked to violent behaviour and weapon carrying on the streets (Andershed, Kerr, & Stattin, 2001), and a significant predictor of later gang membership (Holmes & Brandenburg-Ayres, 1998). Although there is a dearth of literature on the effects of bullying on the peer group generally, the majority of pupils in a Canadian study reported that bullying was distressing (Harachi, Catalano, & Hawkins, 1999). This concurs with findings from a study that evaluated the effectiveness of peer support systems in challenging school bullying, which suggested that many pupils who had not actually used the system, nevertheless appreciated the provision of the service to protect their safety, suggesting that they had felt unsafe before the system was introduced (Cowie, 1998). Research into bullying in the workplace also supports the notion that bullying has an impact on the wider social group, with observers, as well as victims, experiencing their work environment more negatively than non-observers do (Jennifer, 2000).

From the school's perspective, bullying also affects the school staff and the school community as a whole. If allowed to flourish, it can cause disruption, create no-go areas in the school and can undermine the safety of the school site and the authority of the school staff (Hayden & Blaya, 2001). It can also increase tension between staff, add to workloads, become a drain on resources, and cause disruption to the teaching and learning process (Glover, Gough, & Johnson, 2000; Hayden & Blaya,

2001; Neill, 2001). Indeed, in severe cases, teachers are leaving the profession altogether (Neill, 2001). Paradoxically, the values and social norms of the school as a workplace, both formal and informal, will influence whether bullying will or will not be tolerated (Dusenbury, Falco, Lake, Brannigan, & Bosworth, 1997). These values and norms will further influence how bullying behaviours are defined, how staff identify bullying and aggressive situations (e.g., as fighting or play fighting), and whether bullying is recognized and acknowledged as a problem in the school as a whole (Cowie, Naylor, Rivers, Smith, & Pereira, 2002) (see Section 1.3.3, p. 48). The ill effects of bullying are clearly an issue of great and immediate social concern, as they create an unsafe learning and working environment for children and staff alike and adversely affect school life generally.

Starting in the 1970s, researchers have developed and applied a wide range of research tools and techniques to capture the phenomenon of bullying in school, including quantitative methods (such as questionnaires), qualitative methods (such as interviews) and, more recently, structured research activities (such as drawings and cartoons). This literature review will demonstrate that quantitative methods play an important role in drawing our attention to the problem of identifying, defining and understanding bullying in school. The chapter will reveal that questionnaires and surveys, the predominant methods used in school bullying research, have informed our understanding of the prevalence and nature of school bullying, general attitudes towards bullying and children's choice of coping strategies used to address bullying (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Hunter & Boyle, 2004; Whitney & Smith, 1993). In addition, the literature review will illustrate that peer nomination and evaluation methods have provided researchers with the opportunity to investigate participant

roles adopted by children in the bullying process (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996; Sutton & Smith, 1999). Furthermore, the review of quantitative methodologies will make evident that an experimental field study design has enabled the measurement of specific attitudes towards bullying according to the social context within which it took place (Baldry, 2004). While quantitative methods provide researchers with a broad understanding of the scale and nature of school bullying, one major limitation with such methods is that, rather than being able to discuss aspects of the phenomenon most relevant to them, participants are constrained by the fixed response choices provided by the researcher (Bosacki, Marini, & Dane, 2006).

Although less frequently employed, qualitative methods and structured research activities present children with the opportunity to provide intuitive and spontaneous responses about their experiences, which in turn offers researchers the possibility to access and understand a broader range of issues and views. In addition, the data generated by such methods not only extends and challenges existing knowledge gained from employing quantitative and empirical approaches, it also provides new insights and perspectives (Bosacki et al., 2006).

This review will make evident that qualitative methods enhance knowledge and develop understanding gained from quantitative methods by providing new insights and perspectives about school bullying. A valuable contribution to the literature includes evidence from semi-structured interviews that demonstrated the relationship between the experience of being bullied and common childhood health problems (Williams, Chambers, Logan, & Robinson, 1996). Furthermore, data gathered from



interviews suggest that repetition and intentionality may not be the most important defining characteristics of bullying (Guerin & Hennessy, 2002). In addition, the results of a study that employed interviews using hypothetical scenarios demonstrated that not only do children judge that it is morally wrong to hurt others or to treat others unfairly, they also perceive that aggression is wrong and harmful (Shaw & Wainryb, 2006). Furthermore, the literature reviewed in this chapter will illustrate that employing observational methods enhances our understanding of school bullying with regard to playground behaviour and peer interactions, and participant roles during bullying episodes (Boulton, 1995; O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Moreover, evidence from observational studies not only replicates the presence of two distinct sub-groups of victims (passive, aggressive) distinguished by quantitative methods (Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988), it advances understanding about victims' emotional regulation and the impact of coping styles on bullying interactions (Wilton, Craig, & Pepler, 2000) (see Section 1.3.2, p. 43 for a fuller discussion of sub-types of victims). In addition, this review will demonstrate that employing qualitative methods combined with structured research activities to explore children's experiences of bullying challenges current assumptions about the phenomenon in that children's definitions do not necessarily concur with those of researchers and other adults (Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefhoghe, 2002). The present review will illustrate that employing structured research activities (pictorial and narrative strategies) in combination with interviews extends our knowledge about school bullying in terms of revealing sadistic aspects not currently distinguished in the existing sub-types of aggression and bullying (Bosacki et al., 2006). Finally, research using structured research activities in combination with semi-structured interviews represents a unique attempt to explore children's

understanding of bullying with regard to the representations of the bullying relationship, and emotional attributions and coping strategies during bullying interactions (del Barrio, Almeida, van der Meulen, Barrios, & Gutiérrez, 2003).

Data gathered using qualitative and structured research activities have the potential to offer researchers an in-depth range of perspectives that children have on the phenomenon of bullying in school (Cowie et al., 2002). Such results provide researchers with the opportunity to view the issue of school bullying from a different perspective, one that will enable them to reflect upon and challenge their underlying theoretical, methodological and ethical assumptions (Bosacki et al., 2006). In turn, these findings offer researchers the opportunity to make an impact on real world problems such as bullying in school through the design of appropriate interventions and is, therefore, socially responsible in that it highlights and serves the needs of research participants and their communities (Rogers, 2000).

My particular interest in school bullying arose from my work on a number of research projects, which investigated both the understanding of, and the prevention of, bullying and violence in schools. Thus, when I began this present programme of research, I had already spent two years reviewing the literature on school bullying. At the same time, I was becoming aware of a growing interest in listening to children's voices, an approach which respected children's rights in terms of freedom of choice to participate and freedom of expression that paralleled legislation such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the Human Rights Act (1998).

In the introduction to their edited book, *Research with children: Perspectives and practices*, Christensen and James (2000a) argue that only through listening and hearing what children say can we better understand the experiences of childhood from the child's point of view. In their introduction, they suggest that since "children are not adults...researchers need...to adopt practices that resonate with children's own concerns and routines" (Christensen & James, 2000b, p. 7). As I became familiar with the individual accounts of researching children and childhood experiences presented in the Christensen and James' (2000a) volume, each of which demonstrated a commitment to researching *with* children as competent social actors, the idea that greater emphasis be given to children as active participants in representing their perspectives, views and experiences caught my interest. I wondered whether it was possible to locate children as social actors in the research encounter in my own work. A second literature search on conducting research with children demonstrated that the theoretical, methodological and ethical implications of such a stance, that is, listening to children's voices, the need to consider issues of power and status differentials, and the need to take a reflexive stance in the research process, were apparent in social science journals. With this in mind, I began to develop a number of research ideas combining emergent research interests drawn from various studies of school bullying, with ideas on involving children as social actors acquired from the social science literature.

Subsequently, I formulated a broad aim for my programme of research: to engage children meaningfully as active participants in the research process in order to explore their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices. Specific aims arose from two detailed literature reviews, one on school bullying



presented in the following sections of this chapter and one on conducting research with children considered in Chapter 2.

In the next section of this chapter, various methods documented in the existing research literature on bullying in school are reviewed. Quantitative methodologies, such as self-report questionnaires, peer nomination methods and experimental methods, which have generated valuable and essential data regarding the phenomenon, are discussed. The review then considers qualitative methods, such as interviews, observations and structured research activities, which have not only provided detailed information about the processes and dynamics of bullying situations in school but which also demonstrate the potential of such methods to extend and enhance our knowledge of school bullying from the child's perspective.

The third section of this chapter introduces a number of theoretical models drawn from the literature on youth violence, which offer effective perspectives from which to understand bullying in school. These theories include the risk and protective factors framework, the ecological perspective, and the socio-cultural perspective. Each theory offers a framework for understanding bullying in school, which goes beyond the individual dyad of bully/victim, to take into account the social and cultural contexts within which bullying takes place. I present each theory with illustrations and examples from existing empirical research.

## *1.2 Bullying in School*

### *1.2.1 Definitions and Types of Bullying*

There has been a growing worldwide research interest in school bullying over the past 25 years with researchers employing a wide variety of methodologies to study the phenomenon. However, there is currently no consensus among researchers regarding the definition of bullying in school, with variations widespread in the literature and numerous discussion and review papers published on the subject (e.g., Arora, 1996; Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt, & Lemme, 2006; Smith et al., 2002; Underwood, Galen, & Paquette, 2001). Nevertheless, there is broad agreement regarding the key characteristics that constitute bullying namely: the deliberate intention to harm another individual; repetition over time; and an asymmetric power relationship, such that the victim has difficulty in defending him- or herself effectively (e.g., Olweus, 1991; Smith & Morita, 1999). However, not all researchers are in agreement with these key criteria. For example, a minority believe that an aggressive behaviour does not have to be repeated over time to be considered bullying (e.g., Stephenson & Smith, 1989). This concurs with adult definitions of bullying among patients in a maximum-secure hospital. Based upon interviews with 30 patients, Ireland (2005) reported that the majority of participants considered that aggressive behaviour that occurred on a single occasion constituted bullying. Indeed, even Olweus (1999a), often considered the pioneer of school bullying research, acknowledged that a single incident of aggressive behaviour could be regarded as bullying under certain circumstances. More importantly, a review of the literature suggests that children hold much broader definitions of bullying than those used by researchers, particularly younger children (see Section 1.2.3.1, p. 26).

A number of researchers (e.g., Farrington, 1993; Guerin & Hennessy, 2002) recognize that the majority of studies to date have used definitions of bullying derived from researchers' constructions of the phenomenon. For example, using self-report questionnaires researchers typically present participants with a definition of bullying behaviour to which they are then required to indicate whether they have experienced or witnessed such behaviours (Guerin & Hennessy, 2002). Whereas Arora and Thompson (1987) suggest that using the word bullying may influence children's responses (see Section 1.2.2.1, p. 13), a commonly used definition is one proposed by Olweus (1994). He defines school bullying as a sub-set of aggressive behaviour with certain specific characteristics such that "a person is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (p. 1173). He further argues that although the terms bullying and violence overlap, there is also a distinction between the two. He states: "there is a good deal of bullying without violence (e.g. bullying by words, gestures, intentional exclusion from the group) and, likewise,...there is a good deal of violence that cannot be characterized as bullying (e.g. an occasional fight in the playground)" (Olweus, 1999a, p. 12). In response to the European perspectives on the nature of school violence outlined in Smith (2003), Slee (2003) commented that there appeared to be general agreement that the terms bullying and violence overlap, and that the accepted understanding of bullying is that it is a particularly destructive form of aggression. Given that these terms are often used interchangeably in the literature, where the terms are used herein, it is with the above discussion in mind.

Whereas the majority of researchers have presented participants with a definition of bullying, others have sought to obtain children's and young people's views of what

constitutes bullying behaviour (e.g., Guerin & Hennessy, 2002; Naylor et al., 2006; Smith & Levan, 1995; Smith et al., 2002). A review of the literature suggests an age trend in children's definitions of bullying, with changes in how they define the term, as they get older (e.g., Smith, Madsen, & Moody, 1999). For example, using a pictorial questionnaire with 6- and -7-year-olds, Smith and Levan (1995) found that children's definitions of bullying were much broader compared with those of either older children, or researchers, and included fighting and aggressive behaviour that was not necessarily repeated over time. Furthermore, in a study carried out to explore primary school children's definitions of bullying, participants did not view intentionality or repetition as key criteria (Guerin & Hennessy, 2002) (see Section 1.2.3.1, p.26). On the other hand, in a study of secondary school children's definitions of bullying, boys were more likely than girls to construe bullying as involving repetition, and older pupils were more likely than younger ones to refer to an imbalance of power (Naylor et al., 2006). Moreover, in a study of 324 secondary school pupils, 20% of participants defined bullying not just in terms of the bully's behaviour but also with regard to its negative effects on the victim (Naylor, Cowie, & del Rey., 2001).

Traditionally early research into bullying focused on aggressive physical behaviour in boys, in part because physical aggression is more easily observable and of a form that is stereotypically male (Underwood et al., 2001). More recently, however, research has recognized other forms of bullying including verbal and psychological (e.g., Farrington, 1993). Indeed, Björkqvist, Lagerspetz and Kaukiainen (1992) have distinguished between direct physical, direct verbal, and indirect aggression. *Direct physical* aggression includes such behaviours as pushing, hitting, punching, or



kicking. *Direct verbal* aggression may take the form of yelling abuse at another, name-calling, using insulting expressions, or making verbal threats. *Indirect aggression*, sometimes referred to as social aggression (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson, & Gariépy, 1989) or relational aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), as the term implies, uses less direct forms of aggressive behaviour such as spreading malicious rumours about another, excluding a person from the group, or disclosing another's secrets to a third person (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Österman, 1992). To complicate matters even further, indirect aggression has been divided into subtypes. There has been much research into reactive (e.g., an angry or defensive response to provocation) and proactive aggression (e.g., to obtain a desired goal) (Crick & Dodge, 1996; Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002). Most research has focused on reactive forms of bullying and aggression whereby aggressive behaviours under investigation are a response to provocation employed to express anger and cause harm (Underwood et al., 2001). On the other hand, they suggest that indirect aggression might be employed for more proactive reasons to, for example, gain or preserve social status, or even to provide entertainment value through manipulating the others' relationships or self-esteem. Research in Australia, which supports this possibility, has found that adolescent girls mention alleviating boredom, creating excitement, and managing peer relationships as major motivations for using indirect aggressive behaviours (Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000a).

In terms of types of behaviour, a study that has explored children's perceptions of what constitutes bullying found that the two most commonly reported forms cited were physical (e.g., hitting, kicking, pulling/pushing, tripping, physical hurt) and verbal (e.g., name-calling, teasing); the next most commonly reported was

psychological (e.g., threatening, spreading rumours, intimidation, blackmail) (Guerin & Hennessy, 2002). The least commonly reported form of bullying was social exclusion (e.g., excluding from games or groups, not talking to someone). Thus, a review of the literature suggests that while there is some concordance between researchers' definitions and children's views on the range of behaviours that constitute bullying there is less agreement regarding the key criteria that define bullying behaviour. Having addressed the main issues regarding definition and types of bullying behaviour, both from children's and researchers' perspectives, each of the main research methods used in the study of school bullying will be examined in turn in the following sections with reference to recently published research.

### *1.2.2 Quantitative Methodologies*

Given that research interest in bullying in school is a relatively new area of research, researchers have tended to focus their attention on the prevalence and nature of bullying, in particular age and gender differences, types of bullying behaviour, children's choice of coping strategies and general attitudes to bullying. Even though a large amount of this research is descriptive in nature, Smith (1997) argues that this is a necessary starting-point in order to provide a base-line measure for future research and to make the case to policy makers that bullying in school is a real issue for many children. This section will now address key quantitative methodologies employed in the study of school bullying.

#### *1.2.2.1 Questionnaires and surveys.*

Large-scale surveys of bullying in school have mainly relied on pupil self-report measures using the *My Life in School Checklist* (Arora & Thompson, 1999) and the

Olweus (1991, 1996) questionnaires (Smith, 2004). The *My Life in School Checklist* (Arora & Thompson, 1999), available in a primary and secondary school version, has been used to gauge the extent of bullying behaviours, other aggressive behaviours and friendly behaviours in school during the preceding week. Findings from 31 schools suggested that the level of bullying in primary schools was higher than that experienced by secondary schools, and older pupils in a school were likely to report less bullying than younger children (Arora, 1999). One of the advantages of the checklist is that it does not mention the word bullying, which reduces the confounding effect of children reporting an increase in bullying because their level of awareness has been raised (Arora, 1999).

On the other hand, the anonymous self-report *Bully/Victim Questionnaire* (Olweus, 1991, 1996), a measure of the incidence of bullying and others' reactions to bullying for children of 8-years-old and above, does include a definition of bullying as cited above (see p. 10). According to Olweus (1999b), this gives children a clear understanding of what it is they are required to respond to when completing the questionnaire. Using a modified version of the Olweus (1991) questionnaire for a United Kingdom (UK) context, the first large-scale study of bullying in England in the early 1990s, in which over 6,700 pupils participated, confirmed that bullying was a problem for a substantial number of pupils (Whitney & Smith, 1993). For example, the results found that of the 2600 primary children (8- to 11-year-olds) who participated, 27% reported being bullied "*sometimes or more*" and 10% reported being bullied "*once a week or more*" during the current term. Reports of bullying others during the current school term were higher amongst boys compared with girls,

with 12% (16% boys, 7% girls) reporting “*sometimes or more*”, and 4% (6% boys, 1% girls) reporting “*once a week or more*”.

Besides illuminating our understanding about the incidence of bullying behaviour, the results of the Whitney and Smith (1993) study also highlighted some age and gender trends regarding the nature of school bullying. For example, girls were as equally likely to be bullied as boys were, but were only about half as likely to be involved in bullying others. There was little difference between male and female reports of the frequency of being bullied, however reported incidence tended to decrease with age. Girls rarely bullied boys; rather other boys bullied them, whereas girls experienced bullying from both boys and girls.

The results also informed our understanding of the nature of school bullying in terms of types of behaviour, who bullies and the location of bullying. For example, the most common form of bullying behaviour was being called nasty names; the next most frequent forms of bullying experienced by a quarter or more children included being physically hurt, being threatened, and having rumours spread about me. Boys were more likely to be involved in physical forms of bullying (e.g., being physically hit, and threatened), while girls were more involved in verbal (e.g., being called nasty names) and indirect forms (e.g., social exclusion). In primary schools, the majority (76%) of bullying occurred in the playground, with nearly one-third (30%) of incidents occurring in the classroom, and lesser amounts occurring in the corridors. Whereas pupils in the same class as the victim carried out the majority of reported bullying, one-third was carried out by pupils in the year above the victim, and one-quarter by pupils in the same year group, but from a different class.



Approximately half of the bullying involved one child bullying another, and the other half involved several children (Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Whereas the method of this study closely resembled that employed by Olweus (1991), and is therefore suitable for cross-national comparisons, one of the main limitations of the survey, acknowledged by the authors, is that it was carried out in one urban conurbation in the South Yorkshire area of the UK and, therefore, generalizability may be limited. Although the authors acknowledge that there may be some regional differences, they state that there is no reason to view Sheffield as atypical of many other urban conurbations in the UK. The authors suggest that one of the main advantages of conducting a large-scale anonymous survey such as this one was that it provided one of the best methods for establishing the incidence of bullying in school in the UK (Whitney & Smith, 1993). Despite it being an influential study, often and widely quoted, it could be argued that this data is now somewhat dated. It does not address either homophobic bullying, a form of indirect bullying that is apparent from retrospective studies with adults, for example, or racist bullying (see Section 1.3.3, p. 48). Neither does it address behaviours such as 'cyber bullying' (i.e., nasty or threatening emails or text messages) that have emerged with recent technological advances (Noret & Rivers, 2006).

Self-report questionnaires have also been used to investigate children's choice of appraisal and coping strategies in dealing with bullying. For example, Hunter and Boyle (2004) examined appraisal and coping strategies amongst 459 9- to 14-year-old schoolchildren using a self-report questionnaire designed to collect information relating to victimization, and including a definition taken from Whitney and Smith

(1993). Analysis of the data revealed two types of appraisals: challenge appraisals and threat appraisals. In terms of challenge appraisals, participants were predominantly concerned with personal growth issues (44%) often referring to the ways in which being bullied might benefit them, and the experience gained from coping with bullying as a victim (19%). Two types of threat appraisals were most prevalent, that is, the idea that pupils would suffer negative psychological consequences from being bullied (38%) and concern about the potential physical consequences of being bullied (28%). Four styles of coping were evident from the analysis. These were problem focused (e.g., took things one step at a time, stood up for what they wanted), seeking social support (e.g., talked to someone, sought advice), wishful thinking (e.g., wished they could change what had happened, wished that the situation would go away) and avoidance (e.g., kept feelings to oneself, tried to forget what had happened). In terms of age differences, younger primary school children reported using more social support strategies than either older primary school children or young people from secondary schools. Furthermore, older primary school children used significantly less problem focused coping strategies than young primary school children. When victims were frequently bullied (i.e., sometimes or more often this term) they reported significantly more wishful thinking and avoidance strategies, compared with when they were bullied infrequently (i.e., once or twice this term). In terms of the relationships between appraisal and coping strategy use, results indicated that if the positive outcomes of a bullying situation were perceived as ambiguous, significantly more problem focused and seeking social support strategies were used compared with when the situation was appraised as one where there would definitely be no positive outcomes. In addition, those participants who appraised themselves as having no control over the bullying used more wishful

thinking than participants who felt that they did have control over the situation. Furthermore, participants who were unsure of whether or not there were positive outcomes used significantly less wishful thinking than those who thought there were definitely positive outcomes. These findings suggest that the strategies that children adopt to cope with bullying are associated with cognitive appraisals of the situation, as well as with variables such as age, gender and frequency of victimization (Hunter & Boyle, 2004).

The coping strategies that pupils adopt will also depend on the perceived values of their peer group and attitudes towards young people in distress (Talamelli & Cowie, 2001). Thus, self-report questionnaires have also been employed to address children's thoughts and feelings regarding bullying in school. While studies carried out to investigate general attitudes towards bully/victim problems in school have found that children are opposed to bullying, that is, they express positive and supportive attitudes towards the victim, research also reveals that pro-social attitudes decrease with increasing age (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Menesini et al., 1997; Rigby & Slee, 1991; Whitney & Smith, 1993). For example, in a survey of 296 primary schoolchildren, which employed a modified version of the original Olweus (1991) questionnaire, in response to what they thought about children who bully others, over one-third of all participants said that they could understand why they did it (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). This compared with nearly a quarter of participants who said that it was difficult to understand why they did it. Moreover, Boulton and Underwood (1992) found that, when asked what they would do if they saw a child of their age being bullied nearly half of all participants indicated that they would try to intervene in some way. Furthermore, nearly one-third said that although

they would do nothing, they felt that they ought to try to help. On the other hand, nearly one-quarter said that they would do nothing because it was none of their business (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). While the results of this study have provided some useful information about children's attitudes to bullying, the authors acknowledge that they reveal little about why certain children are involved in such behaviour and the emotions and feelings that they experience. Furthermore, questionnaire studies offer little in the way of understanding bullying behaviours in the wider social context, such as, children's peer groups (Boulton & Underwood, 1992).

The questionnaire method offers a number of advantages, namely, it is possible to collect large quantities of data in a relatively short space of time, and anonymity of participants can be ensured (Cowie et al., 2002). However, there is a disadvantage with regard to employing questionnaires in terms of definition. If researchers provide a definition, they cannot be certain that, in responding to the questionnaire, the participant is referring to the researcher's definition as opposed to their own (Cowie et al., 2002). Conversely, if researchers do not provide a definition, they cannot know whether children's responses refer to the key characteristics of bullying broadly agreed by the research community (Olweus, 1999b) (see Section 1.2.1, p. 9). Furthermore, the rigid format of the questionnaire renders responsiveness to each individual's unique experience impossible, thus making it difficult to gain detailed information about the processes and dynamics of bullying situations and the social context in which it takes place and reducing the possibility of uncovering radically new findings (Cowie et al., 2002).



### 1.2.2.2 *Peer nomination and peer evaluation measures.*

While the self-report measures mentioned above enlighten us with regard to the incidence and nature of bullying in schools, some researchers have pointed out that the phenomenon cannot be understood without taking into account the social situation in which it takes place (O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli, 2001).

Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Berts, and King (1982) distinguished two important features of bullying, that is, it is collective in nature and it is based on social relationships in the group. Furthermore, research suggests that certain dimensions of the social group context (negative affect, high aversive behaviour, high activity level, low group cohesion, competitiveness) are related to the occurrence of aggressive behaviours among individual children in the group (DeRosier, Cillessen, Coie, & Dodge, 1994). The social group context also has an effect on how children react to aggression between members of the group, for example, siding with the victim, which in turn influences the group atmosphere following the aggressive episode. Thus, some researchers have developed peer nomination and evaluation techniques to investigate participant roles in the bullying process (e.g., Björkqvist & Österman, 1998; Salmivalli et al., 1996). The results of studies using such techniques suggest that peers play various roles in the bullying episode from simply providing an audience to becoming actively involved in the interaction between the bully and the victim (O'Connell et al., 1999). For example, the *Participant Role Scale* developed by Salmivalli et al. (1996) involved children evaluating how well each child in their class, including themselves, fits 50 behavioural descriptions of bullying situations (e.g., starts bullying, doesn't do anything) from which the Participant Roles were then derived. Pupils were also requested to identify peers in their class who were being bullied by others (Salmivalli et al., 1996). In addition to the roles that one

might expect to find, that is, *Bullies* and *Victims* as implicitly defined in the Olweus (1991) definition cited above, and those not involved, Salmivalli et al.'s (1996) research has distinguished a further four participant roles. *Assistants* actively participate in the bullying (e.g., through physically restraining a victim) and *Reinforcers* may provide positive feedback to a bully by shouting encouragement. Although *Outsiders* may not be directly involved (i.e., they are unaware of the incident), they may contribute indirectly to a bullying situation merely through silent approval or, possibly unwittingly, by not taking a stance (overt or otherwise) against a bully. Salmivalli (1999) suggests that some of those involved in bullying (e.g., outsiders), although aware of their passive role and knowing that bullying often requires the intervention of others, may lack the necessary skills to actively. Finally, and as the label suggests, *Defenders* actively defend victims by intervening in the bullying process through, for example, telling an adult or comforting the victim.

Research in the UK has been carried out employing a similar procedure. Sutton and Smith (1999) used a shortened adaptation of the Participant Role Scale (Salmivalli et al., 1996) with 193 7- to 11-year-olds in England. They found that a participant role could be assigned to 84.5% of the total sample, with 18.1% Victims, 14.0% Bullies, 5.7% Reinforcers, 7.3% Assistants, 27.5% Defenders, 11.9% Outsiders, and 15.5% with no role. In addition, they found that 5.7% of Victims had a secondary role of Bully, and 8.0% of Bullies had a secondary role of Victim. Sometimes referred to as provocative or aggressive victims, these individuals display characteristics of both bullies and victims (Griffin & Gross, 2004; Smith, 2004). The role that a bully/victim takes is context-dependent, such that they may bully in situations where they are in a position of power, whereas in another situation they may be the victim.

Moreover, these roles are not necessarily stable and static over time. For example, a follow-up study designed to compare friendships, behavioural characteristics, victimization experiences and coping strategies of 406 pupils aged 13- to 16-years-old provided information on participant role movement (Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, 2004). Participants were followed-up from an earlier study, which enabled the classification of victim profiles on two occasions, two years apart. The classification revealed that of the 204 victims participating in the first study, 58 could be classified as continuing victims, and 146 as escaped victims. Of the 209 non-victims participating in the first study, 175 had never been bullied over the previous two years (non-victims); whereas 34 were currently being bullied (new victims) (the remaining 7 were classified as in-between status and dropped from the analysis).

With regard to age differences, Salmivalli (2001) notes that although it is too early to say much about the developmental trends of participant roles in these studies due to methodological differences and small sample sizes, these early findings suggest that reinforcing the bully is less common among younger age groups, whereas it becomes more typical in pre- and early adolescence. Conversely, research findings suggest that defending the victim may be more common among younger children. Research on attitudes to bullying (see also Section 1.2.2.1, p. 13), which suggests that pro-victim attitudes decrease with age (Menesini et al., 1997; Rigby & Slee, 1991), supports these age trends.

Salmivalli (2001) states that, one of the main advantages of peer evaluations as a source of information is that, depending on class size, it is possible to collect as many

as 20 or 30 estimates of any one child participating in the study. Thus, she argues that collecting the opinions of a number of “natural observers” of daily classroom social situations increases the reliability of the measurement. Furthermore, it has been suggested that in considering participant roles, peers are the most accurate sources of information about their classmates (Salmivalli, 2001). However, Owens, Daly, and Slee (2005) have used peer nomination scales in a modified form (i.e., as self-report), as ethics committees in Australia generally consider the naming of peers in survey instruments unethical (L. Owens, personal communication, December 13, 2005). Moreover, Sutton (Commentary, Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 2004, p. 63) said of using an adapted version of the Participant Role Scale: “when I packed up each day and went home, there was always a nagging thought that one of the kids was getting pressured into revealing who they had nominated”. Moreover, Alderson (2004, p. 108) suggests that labelling children and asking a third party for their views about a child, as is required in peer nominations and evaluations, is disrespectful and unethical since a “double-standard [is operating] when researchers assume that children will not know or mind about these methods, which adults would refuse to accept for themselves”.

#### *1.2.2.3 Experimental methods.*

Whereas self-report questionnaire studies are useful for learning about general attitudes towards bullying, while uncommon, experimental methods have been employed to measure specific attitudes towards bullying according to the social context within which it takes place. Baldry (2004) undertook an experimental field study, the aim of which was to investigate whether positive and negative judgements of bullying and victimization, and blaming of the victim, varied according to the



gender of the observers, bullies and victims and whether the bullying took place alone or in a group. One hundred and seventeen pupils aged 11- to 12-years-old, recruited from an Italian middle school, were randomly allocated to one of four independent groups. Participants viewed one of four versions of a silent video depicting a brief standardized bullying episode taking place in a school, according to experimental condition, that is, one girl bullied by a group of girls; one girl bullied by one girl; one boy bullied by a group of boys; and, one boy bullied by one boy. Following presentation of the video, participants completed a self-report questionnaire that measured the dependent variables, that is, ‘blaming the victim’ and positive and negative judgments of the victim and the bully shown in the video. Overall, the study supported previous findings that suggest that pupils have pro-victim attitudes (Rigby & Slee, 1991). However, participants considered that bullies were stronger and braver than victims were, particularly when bullying alone. Baldry (2004) suggested that such attributions might be viewed as a sign of courage, which leads to admiration, particularly with regard to boys. This concurs with early research using peer nomination techniques, which identified a group of “controversial” children (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982). Results indicated that while peers perceived these children as disruptive and aggressive, they also described them as good to have in the peer group in terms of their leadership qualities. It is possible, according to Smith, Cowie, & Blades (2003, p. 148), that “some children use aggressive behaviour as a means of acquiring status in the peer group”.

The study also revealed gender differences in terms of same gender identification. For example, male participants blamed the victim less when the bullying took place among boys as opposed to girls with the reverse being true for female participants,

that is, they blamed the victim less when the bullying took place among girls rather than among boys (Baldry, 2004). Baldry (2004) suggests that because individuals strive for a positive self-concept these results imply that when something negative happens to someone from the same in-group, that is, a victim of the same gender, then participants tend to protect their self-image by positively judging the victim as similar to them (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Furthermore, gender differences also indicated that male participants blamed the victim more when a group bullied her or him whereas female participants blamed the victim more when a lone bully bullied the victim. In addition, male participants judged the victim more positively when an individual, as opposed to a group of bullies, bullied her or him. Conversely, female participants judged the victim more positively when a group bullied her or him. Thus, female participants appeared to feel more empathic towards a victim of group bullying, whereas male participants appeared to feel more empathic towards a victim of one-to-one bullying. One possible explanation for this finding is that girls identify themselves more closely with a form of bullying that is more typical among girls, that is, indirect forms (spreading rumours), as opposed to direct physical bullying more common amongst boys (Whitney & Smith, 1993). However, despite the incidence of mixed gender bullying, particularly by boys to girls (see Section 1.2.2.1, p. 13), mixed gender conditions were not included in the study. Furthermore, given the sample was selected from one school, generalizability of the findings may be limited.

Using an experimental design, Baldry's (2004) study extends knowledge gained from self-report measures to demonstrate that attitudes towards bullies and victims are context-related and thus vary according to who holds them (male or female), towards

whom (male or female, bully or victim) and within which social context (lone bully or a group of bullies). While experimental methods offer a rigorous and objective approach to the study of bullying in school, such approaches do not allow for the collection of in-depth, qualitative information about attitudes regarding school bullying. Furthermore, it is now widely recognized that the researcher is no longer considered as a detached, neutral observer in pursuit of one reality that can be known, rather research approaches employing qualitative methods allow the acquisition of multiple perspectives of a phenomenon (Robson, 2002).

### *1.2.3 Qualitative Methodologies*

Quantitative methodologies are useful for providing a broad picture of the nature and scale of the problem nevertheless qualitative methods have been used to gather more in-depth information about the phenomenon of school bullying. Although to date, qualitative methods have been less frequently employed in the study of bullying in schools, a review of the literature reveals that a number of approaches have been adopted such as semi-structured interviews, observations and structured research activities. This next section will now turn to each of the main qualitative methods employed in the study of school bullying with reference to recently published research.

#### *1.2.3.1 Semi-structured interviews.*

While descriptive studies as outlined above are an important first step for the investigation of bullying in schools, Smith (1997) suggests that the phenomenon might benefit from qualitative methods, such as case studies and interviews. He argues that the use of qualitative data offers a broader perspective of the problem,

providing insights into the processes and dynamics of school bullying, which complement the quantitative survey data. By asking open-ended questions, interviews offer the researcher both the opportunity to access sensitive material from participants and, in addition, the opportunity to be responsive to the unique nature of each bullying situation as experienced by individual participants (Cowie et al., 2002). Williams et al. (1996) conducted a study with 2962 children aged 8- to 9-years-old to examine the relationship between reports of being bullied and common childhood health problems such as tummy aches and poor sleep patterns. Eighteen school nurses conducted semi-structured interviews as part of a school medical examination. Reports of being bullied were associated with increased reports of not sleeping well, bed-wetting, feeling sad, and experiencing more than occasional headaches and tummy aches. One of the advantages of using this approach was that the interview schedule was not rigid rather it was modified to suit each child, with any health symptom that was raised being explored further during the interview (Williams et al., 1996). While the authors suggest that one of the disadvantages of this approach was the lack of standardisation of the interview process between nurses, thus raising concerns about reliability (Williams et al., 1996), nevertheless, these findings represent a much-needed contribution to the literature on school bullying.

Furthermore, interview studies have been used as a means of researching children from under-represented populations revealing, for example, that vulnerable children are substantially more at risk of being involved in bully/victim situations than others (Martlew & Hodson, 1991; Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993). Whitney, Smith, and Thompson (1994) carried out an interview study with 186 children aged between 6- and 11-years-old, drawn from three primary schools, to look at bully/victim problems



among children with special needs compared with children of the same age who had no special needs (labelled mainstream children by the researchers). Interview data, using self- and teacher-reports, revealed that nearly two-thirds of the children with special educational needs reported being bullied, compared to just over one quarter of mainstream children. They were also more at risk of bullying others, with just under one third reporting bullying others compared to about one-sixth of mainstream children. The authors stated that in choosing to implement a semi-structured interview design they were addressing the limitations of their questionnaire survey (Whitney & Smith, 1993) in which they felt that issues relating to children with special educational needs had not been adequately investigated. For example, although the questionnaires used in the survey were presented in a large print format, the authors suggested that they might have been difficult for children with learning or language difficulties to read (Whitney et al., 1994).

In addition, the findings from interview studies offer the potential to extend and challenge existing knowledge gathered from quantitative survey data. Results of a study that explored the definitions of 166 primary school children, with a modal age of 12-years, suggested that repetition and intention may not be the most important defining characteristics of bullying (Guerin & Hennessy, 2002) (see Section 1.2.1, p. 9). Semi-structured interviews revealed that nearly half of all participants perceived that behaviours occurring once or twice constituted bullying; moreover, just over half reported that behaviours did not have to be repeated over time to be considered bullying. In terms of intentionality, the majority of pupils believed that intent was not necessary for a particular behaviour to be defined as bullying. Likewise, younger children were less likely to mention an imbalance of power as an important

characteristic. Furthermore, in an interview study of 159 participants ranging in age from 5- to 29-years, younger children were significantly less likely to mention the imbalance of power criterion (Smith et al., 1999). Whereas 12% of 9- to -10-year-olds mentioned an imbalance of power when defining bullying, 30% of 15- to 16-year-olds mentioned this characteristic. The results of these studies highlight the notion that children's definitions of bullying may not always concur with those of researchers' which has implications not only for understanding the phenomenon, but also significant consequences for the effective design of school-based intervention programmes (Guerin & Hennessy, 2002).

Furthermore, in-depth information gained by employing qualitative methods has implications not only for our understanding of bullying in school, but also for the design and implementation of effective interventions and school practices to address school bullying (Murray-Close, Crick, & Galotti, 2006). Shaw and Wainryb (2006) conducted an interview study to explore how children understand situations of conflict in which victims of seemingly unfair or hurtful acts do not respond in ways that suggest that they are unwilling victims, but rather as complying with the situation. Using hypothetical scenarios depicting peer victimization (unfair treatment, physical and psychological harm), they interviewed 120 participants aged 5-, 7-, 10-, 13- and 16-years-old to explore how children understand situations in which victims of moral transgressions do not complain about the way they are treated. Each participant was presented with three hypothetical scenarios portraying one child (the transgressor) demanding that another child (the victim) hand over possessions or carry out the transgressor's chores. The victim was depicted responding with resistance (refusal to go along with the demand), compliance

(submitting to the demand) or subversion (promising to comply but covertly resisting the demand). Generally, the results suggested that participants of all ages judged the transgressor's behaviour negatively regardless of how the victim responded. On the other hand, the results revealed a diversity of judgments about the victim's response, suggesting an age difference in children's understanding of the ways in which the victim responded to the demands placed upon them. Younger children judged victims depicted as complying more positively than victims who resisted or pretended to comply. In contrast, participants between the ages of 7- and 16-years-old made more positive judgments of victims portrayed as resisting, than of those represented as complying or subverting. Only 16-year-olds viewed subversion positively. The authors suggested that by the age of 7-years-old, whereas children are mindful of the victim's experience they do not take his or her behavioural response at face value. This indicates that children not only attend to the victim's behavioural response, but also to what they understand or interpret to be the beliefs, emotions and goals of the victim, highlighting the relationship between children's moral reasoning and their psychological understanding (Shaw & Wainryb, 2006). The results of this study suggest that children of all ages are likely to be critical of behaviours that target others' well-being (Shaw & Wainryb, 2006), giving weight to the argument that "bullying...cannot be understood without reference to traditional moral issues involving fairness, other's welfare, and refraining from harming others for personal gain" (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001, p. 62). As such, research into bullying in school that focuses on the area of moral reasoning, such as the study outlined above, could have important implications for interventions that reduce and prevent such conduct (Menesini, Sanchez, Fonzi, Ortega, Costabile, & Lo Feudo, 2003).

### *1.2.3.2 Naturalistic observations.*

Given that research suggests that three-quarters of school bullying incidents occurred in the playground (Whitney & Smith, 1993), Boulton (1995) has argued that observational methods provide the most ecologically valid approach to the study of such behaviour. Furthermore, observational data gathered on the playground or in the classroom regarding how pupils respond to bullying situations challenges what individuals claim they would do in questionnaires and interviews if they were involved in a bullying situation, with what they actually do in a real-life bullying situation (Ólafsson & Jóhannsdóttir, 2004). In his study of 8- to 10-year-old boys classified as bullies, victims or those not involved, Boulton (1995) carried out naturalistic playground observations to examine whom these three groups interacted with and what activities they typically engaged in. Scan sampling of 71 participant pupils' behaviour and partners in the playground was carried out over an eight- to ten-week period. In terms of their social networks, that is, how many different pupils a given participant interacted with in a non-aggressive manner in the playground, the three groups did not differ significantly. However, victims engaged in significantly fewer rule games than either the bullies or the not involved groups, but engaged in significantly more instances of positive social contact with their peers. Victims also spent significantly more time alone than bullies. These findings concur with results from quantitative survey research, which suggest that victims tend to be less popular than other children do (Boulton & Smith, 1994). Furthermore, this study extends our knowledge about the playground behaviour of bullies: they tended to be in larger groups, have larger social networks, and spend less time on their own, than either victims or not involved children. While this study might help to advance our understanding of the development and maintenance of bully-victim status, in terms



of the participant observations the author also identified a number of limitations (Boulton, 1995). Firstly, due to the scan sampling approach, too few episodes of bullying were actually observed within the study time frame, and secondly, the sample was restricted to boys only. Furthermore, O'Connell et al. (1999) argue that such studies are limited due to their focus on the individual child. Using samples of naturalistic audio/video-taped school playground data of children aged from 5- to 12-years-old, and taking the peer group as the unit of analysis, O'Connell et al. (1999) examined the potential roles that peers played in bullying episodes in the school playground. Trained research assistants carried out filming and participants were asked to wear a waist pouch containing a microphone to collect remote audio recordings of playground behaviour. Of the 120 hours of data collected, 57 segments of playground bullying within the context of a peer group (two or more peers) were considered of high enough quality to be analyzed. The results confirmed that peers played a central role in the process of playground bullying episodes whether as active participants or as bystanders. Peers were more likely to behave in ways that reinforced the bullying behaviour and peer presence was positively related to the persistence of bullying episodes. That said, during bullying episodes peers spent 25% of their time intervening on behalf of victims. This contrasts with questionnaire data on attitudes to bullying, which indicated that nearly 50% of pupils responded that they would try to intervene in some way if they saw a child of their own age being bullied (Boulton & Underwood, 1992).

Although the data from this study provided insights into peer processes that are not forthcoming from questionnaires, O'Connell et al. (1999) highlight a number of limitations with the study. While the methodology allowed the observation of overt

forms of bullying, such as, kicking and hitting, indirect bullying, such as gossiping and rumour spreading was less easily identified (O'Connell et al., 1999).

Furthermore, the observational methodology was limited as some children were self-conscious about wearing microphones. In addition, the research design did not include the opportunity to interview participants as they watched the videos of their behaviour, which would have enabled children to clarify what was actually happening in the playground, for example, whether physical contact was play fighting, rough and tumble play or real fighting (Rebolo Marques & Neto, 2006).

While the school playground is the most frequently cited location for incidents of bullying, nearly one-third of primary school pupils identified the classroom as the location of bullying (Whitney & Smith, 1993). Thus, Wilton, Craig and Pepler (2000) argue that observations of behaviour in the classroom provide an ecologically valid approach to the study of school bullying. Using naturalistic observations of victims, bullies (identified using peer nomination methods), and their peers, they observed the emotional facial displays and the coping behaviours of victims from Grade 1 through to Grade 6 (mean age 10.1 years) during bullying interactions occurring in free play in the classroom over a 120-hour period. The results identified high levels of emotional displays of interest, joy and anger in both bullies and victims, accounting for 90% of all bully emotional displays and 67% of all victim emotional displays. Furthermore, victims demonstrated significantly more emotional displays of surprise and sadness than did bullies. In addition, the results identified two distinct clusters of coping strategies, that is, problem-solving strategies (e.g., ignoring, acquiescence, avoidance) associated with the de-escalation and resolution of bullying episodes, and aggressive, emotional strategies (e.g., physical aggression,

verbal aggression, and emotional outbursts) that tended to perpetuate and escalate the bullying interaction. Aggressive, emotional strategies accounted for nearly half of all victim coping styles, and were 13 times less likely than problem-solving approaches to de-escalate a bullying episode. On the other hand, problem-solving strategies were associated with de-escalation and resolution of bullying, and accounted for over half of the observed coping styles. Furthermore, the problem-solving cluster comprised both active (instrumental) and passive (avoidance, acquiescence, ignoring) coping styles, used by 16% and 84% of the victims in the sample, respectively. These findings concur with the results of quantitative research, which suggest the presence of two distinct subgroups of victims, passive and aggressive, distinguishable by their coping strategies during bullying episodes (Perry et al., 1988). Moreover, these results advance our knowledge about the emotional regulation and behavioural coping styles of victims, suggesting that the choices they make have a discernable influence on the course and outcome of classroom bullying episodes (Wilton et al., 2000).

A major advantage of observation is its directness and the opportunity it offers to study real-life phenomenon, such as bullying, as they occur in their natural social contexts (Cowie et al., 2002; Robson, 2002). Indeed, observational studies provide the means for gathering naturalistic information regarding peers' involvement in school bullying in locations where bullying is reported as occurring, which extends our knowledge about bullying behaviour gained from quantitative methods (Boulton, 1995; O'Connell et al., 1999). All the same, one of the limitations of observational methods is the issue of whether the observer affects the participants and situation under observation (Robson, 2002). Furthermore, such observational studies, by their

very design, only capture a fraction of the peer interaction, to the exclusion of other activities that occur either before or after the episode under observation (Cowie et al, 2002; Pepler, Craig, & O'Connell., 1999). Observational methods are also very resource-consuming, requiring commitment in terms of financial, human and time resources.

#### *1.2.3.3 Structured research activities.*

In parallel with recent national and international initiatives such as the Children Act (2004) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), newer approaches to consult and research with children have evolved (see Chapter 2 for a review). Ultimately, these include gathering children's views through structured research activities such as drawings and cartoons, as well as, or in combination with, more traditional methods, and viewing children as highly informed experts on their daily life at home and school, both of which raise questions about ethical, methodological and theoretical approaches to research (Alderson & Morrow, 2004). This view of the child as a social actor in their own right requires a commitment to "conducting research *with* children, rather than on them", and necessitates the use of innovative methods that engage children as active participants (O'Kane, 2000, p. 136). A review of the literature suggests that such methods are apparent in research into bullying in school.

In order to maintain participants' interest and keep the research familiar and relevant to them in a non-patronizing manner, Punch (2002a) suggests that an effective way of carrying out research with children is to combine traditional adult research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, with techniques considered more



suitable for use with children. Given that children can find it difficult to communicate their views (Jones, Price & Selby, 1998), such approaches provide children with the opportunity to articulate their experiences and perspectives. A review of the literature suggests that focus groups, used in combination with structured research activities, demonstrate variations in the use of the term ‘bullying’ between children and adult researchers. An international study, which investigated the meanings given to various native terms covering a range of social situations between peers, conducted focus groups with 8- and 14-year-olds (Smith et al., 2002). Based on criteria from existing definitions, such as repetition and imbalance of power, a series of 25 stick-figure cartoons illustrating different situations that might, or might not, be construed as bullying, were employed to generate words currently used by children to describe antisocial and aggressive behaviours and situations at school. Stick figures were utilized to avoid culturally specific references, such as clothing, which might suggest a particular ethnic group or skin colour; this enabled the use of identical pictures across all cultures. The results indicated that 8-year-olds were less able to differentiate between the situations presented in the cartoons than the 14-year-olds. For example, the 8-year-olds primarily discriminated between non-aggressive and aggressive cartoon situations; the 14-year-olds were able to distinguish fighting from physical bullying and were able to single out verbal bullying and social exclusion. Although the cartoon methodology generally appeared successful, children appeared to enjoy the task and it held their attention, the authors acknowledge that one limitation of presenting the cartoons in a pre-ordered sequence was the possibility of order effects; however, these were not evident in the results (Smith et al., 2002). Nevertheless, these findings are in accordance with some of the results of Guerin and Hennessy’s (2002) interview

study, which suggest that the term ‘bullying’ as used by English school children does not equate to the definition used by many researchers and widely accepted in the scientific community (Smith et al., 2002).

Furthermore, a study employing pictorial and narrative strategies, in combination with interviews, revealed an aspect of bullying not previously distinguished in the research literature. Bosacki et al (2006) carried out interviews with 82 children aged 8- to 12-years-old that required them to draw and narrate stories of ‘someone being bullied’. In response to open-ended questions about the characters portrayed in the children’s drawings, comments on bullies’ motives for bullying concur with previously identified concepts of instrumental and reactive aggression. Other psychological motives that the children ascribed to the bully, however, were not consistent with existing sub-types of bullying and aggression, that is, children mentioned sadistic motives, such as, wanting to make the victim sad (70%). Indeed, the bully was portrayed as smiling in 78% of children’s drawings of a bullying situation and when asked what the bully in their drawing might be feeling, 50% of participants mentioned positive feelings, such as happy or glad. In addition, the majority of drawings (93%) depicted only two participants, that is, the bully and the victim, suggesting that children do not share adult researchers’ claims that bullying is a social process that extends beyond the bully/victim dyad (Pepler et al., 1999; Salmivalli, 2001). The drawings did reflect, however, the notion of a power imbalance, with the majority of bullies portrayed as larger than the victims were. This finding contrasts with the results of a questionnaire study carried out by Naylor et al., (2006) which suggested that 13-14-year-old pupils were more likely than 11-12-year-old pupils to refer to an imbalance of power (Naylor et al., 2006).

Pictorial vignettes, such as the *Scripted Cartoon Narrative of Peer Bullying (SCAN)* (Almeida, del Barrio, Marques, Gutiérrez, & van der Meulen, 2001; del Barrio et al., 2003), a set of cartoons depicting a prototypical story of peer bullying, have been used in combination with semi-structured interviews to elicit children's representations of bullying and their understanding of the victim's and bully's experiences. The advantage of such a method is that it is much less threatening for participants to talk about a bullying situation that they can personally relate to than to ask children directly about bullying in their school (Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000b). In a cross-national study using the *SCAN* cartoons, 120 participants from Portugal and Spain, aged 9-, 11- and 13-years-old, were interviewed regarding their representations of the bullying relationship, their emotional attributions to the bully and the victim and coping strategies (del Barrio et al., 2003). The majority of participants perceived the hypothetical relationship portrayed in the cartoons as one of bullying (87.5%), while 12.5% mentioned aggressive episodes without explicitly referring to bullying (del Barrio et al., 2003). With regard to emotional attributions, children of all ages tended to attribute the same emotions to the victim, that is, primarily rejected (55%) and sad (49%), and secondarily, ashamed and afraid (13% each). A number of age and gender differences emerged, with rejected more likely to be attributed to the victim with increased age especially for females; males were more likely than females to mention vulnerable and angry. In adopting the perspective of the victim, while similar emotional attributions were made males were more likely than females to cite feeling afraid, ashamed and annoyed, and females were more likely than males to mention feeling sad. In terms of the bully in the story, the majority of participants attributed happy (60%) and to a lesser extent pride (27%) to this character. Males of all ages were more likely to mention pride,

especially with increased age. In contrast, in assuming the role of the bully, almost half of the sample reported that they would feel guilty (45%) and, to a lesser extent, happy (17%) and proud (11%). An age-effect was observed for the emotional attribution of pride, with older children, especially boys, more likely to mention this. Furthermore, in contrast to mentioning that the bully character would feel jealous, indifferent and angry, in stepping into the role of the bully participants stated that they would feel upset, sad and afraid, illustrating the differentiation that children are able to make between the character in the story and their own imagined emotional experience (del Barrio et al., 2003).

The results of the del Barrio et al. (2003) study further revealed that, when asked how they could change the situation, the most common strategies were seeking adult social support (37%), assertive, that is, telling the bullies to stop (26%), avoidance, that is, avoiding the bullies and the bullying environment (21%) and seeking peer social support (19%). Twenty percent of participants claimed they would adopt a self-adaptive strategy, that is they would do what the bullies wanted and then report the incident to a third party in order to change the situation. In terms of gender differences, girls mentioned significantly more than boys that they would employ an assertive strategy, that is, tell the bullies to stop. With regard to age differences, younger children would ask an adult for help, whereas, older children would ask their peers for help. Not only do these findings concur with results from more recent research using self-report measures (Hunter & Boyle, 2004; Kristensen & Smith, 2003), they also draw upon children's perceptions regarding coping strategies for addressing bullying. In exploring children's knowledge base, Gamliel, Hoover, Daughtry and Imbra (2003) argue that in addition to the "intrinsic value" of



discovering children's views, more effective design and implementation of interventions to address bullying is possible.

Given that few studies to date have researched children's understanding of others' emotions specifically in relation to school bullying, these findings offer new insights. Furthermore, there are a number of advantages to employing pictorial vignettes. First, such a method is useful for discussing school bullying with children, a potentially sensitive topic, since it shifts the focus away from face-to-face discussions that can involve intrusive eye contact to the task, thereby creating a comfortable distance between the researcher and the participant, which facilitates a non-threatening environment (Barter & Renold, 2000). Second, the projective task offers participants the opportunity to discuss both their personal experiences of bullying and other types of bullying that they may not have directly experienced, which may have remained undisclosed using traditional methods of data collection (Barter & Renold, 2000). Third, the task, which requires the participant to take the role of the victim and the bully, provides some emotional distance from the scenario (Jones et al., 1998), which on occasions can facilitate the disclosure of personal experience of bullying in school. Interestingly, however, and given the shift from focusing on the bully/victim dyad toward an understanding of the broader social context within which bullying take place (Pepler et al., 1999), the del Barrio et al. (2003) study did not explore participants' representations from the perspective of members of the peer group other than the bully and the victim.

While traditional quantitative methodologies, such as self-report questionnaires and peer nomination techniques are useful for providing a broad picture of the nature and

scale of bullying in school nevertheless, qualitative methods, such as the ones described above, potentially offer access to a wider range of perspectives that children have about the phenomenon (Cowie et al., 2002). Furthermore, employing qualitative and structured research activities offers children the opportunity to speak for themselves; in turn, this generates rich data that both complements and broadens existing knowledge gained from research primarily conducted using quantitative and empirical approaches (Bosacki et al., 2006).

### *1.3 Theoretical Perspectives*

Even though psychologists have developed theories about aggression in general, few researchers have concentrated on the causes of bullying in schools *per se* (Boulton, 1993). In previous research, there has been a tendency to focus on explanations of bullying behaviour located in the individual, for example, as a response to frustration (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939), through the social learning principles of modelling and reinforcement (Bandura, 1977) and in terms of ‘faulty’ social information processing (Dodge & Coie, 1987). However, such theories do not take into account the wider social context within which bullying takes place. Nevertheless, a number of theories relating to youth violence offer effective perspectives from which to consider bullying in schools, for example, the risk and protective factors framework (e.g., Farrington, 1995, 2002; Rutter, 2000) and the ecological model (World Health Organization [WHO], 1999, 2002). A third perspective, the socio-cultural perspective, offers an alternative explanation for understanding conflict, which is also applicable to the school setting. The next section looks at each of these perspectives in turn.

### *1.3.1 A Risk and Protective Factors Framework*

According to France and Utting (2005), a new ‘prevention science’ emerged in the 1990s, the focus of which was on the scope for early intervention with children and young people at risk of developing problems later in life. For example, Farrington (2002) has argued for a risk-focused prevention paradigm to address the issue of youth crime and anti-social behaviour. Based on the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, a prospective longitudinal survey of about 400 London males, studied from the age of eight, Farrington (1995, 2002) suggested that risk factors are those variables that predict a high rate of youth violence. While they do not necessarily cause violence directly, the presence of a higher number of risk factors increases the potential for violence. Faced with the possibility of being violent, Farrington (2002) concluded that whether a person actually becomes violent depends upon individual cognitive processes and behavioural repertoires. Short-term risk factors include alcohol consumption and actions leading to violence, for example, the escalation of a trivial argument into a significant violent event. The major long-term risk factors for youth violence include psychological (e.g., high impulsiveness, low intelligence), family (e.g., poor parental supervision, harsh discipline, child physical abuse, a violent parent, large family size, a broken family), peer (e.g., peer delinquency), socio-economic (e.g., low socio-economic status) and neighbourhood (e.g., urban residence, residing in a high crime neighbourhood). Furthermore, Farrington’s (1993) research suggested that the most important predictors of bullying behaviour were physical neglect at age eight, convicted parents at age ten, low attainment at age eleven, and fathers not participating in their son’s leisure activities at age twelve.

As well as addressing risk factors, the framework also embraces the concept of

enhancing protective factors in children's lives (France & Utting, 2005). Protective factors refer to "factors that have been consistently associated with good outcomes for children growing up in circumstances where they are, otherwise, heavily exposed to risk" (France & Utting, 2005, p. 80). Such factors include strong social bonds between children and their families, schools and communities; opportunities for consultation, shared social activities and positive involvement in family and school life; parents and teachers who provide effective supervision, clear rules and consistent discipline; parents, teachers and peers who hold pro-social attitudes and model positive pro-social behaviours; and recognition and due praise within the family and the school (Beinart, Anderson, Lee, & Utting, 2002; Farrington, 1996; Youth Justice Board, 2005). While this perspective offers an effective framework from within which to understand bullying in schools, the WHO (1999, 2002) offers a more comprehensive risk factor perspective that emphasizes the interactions of an individual in its changing social and physical environment.

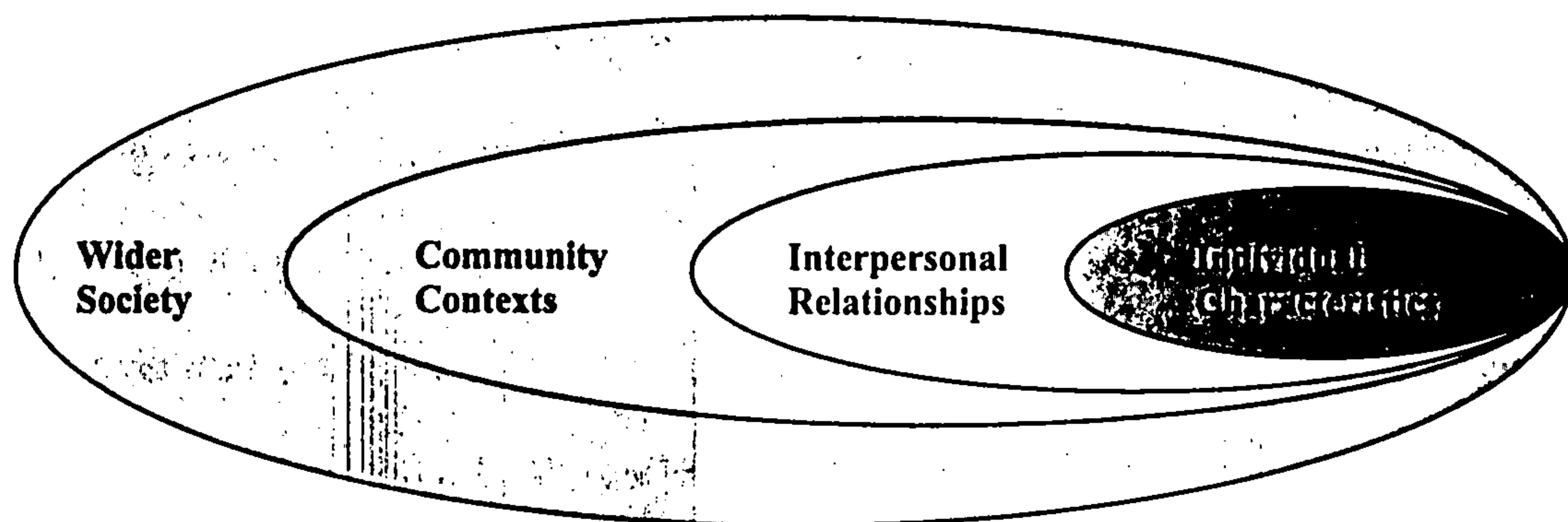
### *1.3.2 An Ecological Model*

Based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) nested ecological system, the WHO (1999, 2002) has adopted an ecological model from which to understand violence and violent behaviour (see Figure 1.1). This ecological model offers an opportunity to understand the multiple causes of violence in terms of the interaction of risk factors operating at four different levels thought to contribute to violent behaviour, that is, individual, relationship, family, and societal (WHO, 2002). Sutton and Smith (1999) suggest that a similar approach to the understanding of school bullying would be beneficial. With this in mind, this section presents the four levels of the ecological



model, each illustrated with examples of risk factors identified by research on school bullying and youth offending.

The first level of the ecological model focuses on the biological and personal history characteristics of the individual that might contribute to the development of bullying behaviour or victimization. For example, early work carried out by Olweus (1980, 1997) with a sample of adolescents ( $n = 51$ ) revealed the importance of a number of factors in the development of an aggressive reaction pattern including the child's temperament. A child with a "hot-headed" temperament as opposed to a child with a quieter disposition was more likely to develop into an aggressive youngster. Moreover, Olweus (1978, cited in Olweus, 1997) found that, in general, typical victims were more anxious and insecure than other pupils. This, combined with low levels of self-esteem and feelings of shame, stupidity, and unattractiveness, led Olweus (1997, p. 176) to label this type of victim *passive/submissive* stating their behaviour and attitude were "a signal to others that they are insecure and worthless individuals who will not retaliate if they are attacked or insulted". On the other hand, *provocative victims* were characterized by a combination of both anxious and aggressive reaction patterns; they could also be regarded as lacking in concentration, suffering from hyperactivity, and displaying irritating behaviour (Olweus, 1997).



*Figure 1.1.* Ecological model for understanding school bullying (adapted from WHO, 2002)

The second level of the model concentrates on how interpersonal relationships, such as those with peers and family, have the potential to increase the risk for victimization and perpetration of violence in terms of shaping an individual's behaviour. For example, peer friendships can act either as a protective factor for victimization or as a risk factor for engaging in bullying of others. Pellegrini, Bartini, and Brooks' (1999) study with a sample of elementary school children explored the relationship between the occurrence of victimization and bullying with group affiliation. Their results suggested that having friends and being liked by one's peers acted as protective factors against victimization. On the other hand, research into aggressive behaviour and social networks with 10- and 13-year-olds, suggested that aggressive children tended to affiliate with aggressive peers thereby providing mutual support for aggressive behaviours toward others (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest, & Gariépy, 1988). In terms of the family context, in their study of bullying and parenting styles with 238 11- to 14-year-olds, Baldry and Farrington (2000), found that bullies were more likely than non-bullies were to have

authoritarian, high punitive and low supportive parents who disagreed with each other. Olweus (1980, 1997) identified a number of other factors in the development of an aggressive reaction pattern in adolescent boys. These included a negative emotional attitude characterized by a lack of warmth and involvement by the primary caregiver during the early years; permissiveness on the part of the primary caregiver for aggressive behaviour by the child; and the use of power-assertive child-rearing methods such as physical punishment and violent emotional outbursts. Olweus (1997, p. 179) summarizes these findings stating, “too little love and care and too much “freedom” in childhood are conditions that contribute strongly in the development of an aggressive reaction pattern”.

The third level of the model examines the community contexts in which interpersonal relationships occur, in this case schools and neighbourhoods, and seeks to identify those settings that are associated with an increased risk for violent behaviour, either as a victim or as a perpetrator. Risk factors at this level may include high levels of residential mobility, heterogeneity, high population density, high levels of unemployment, and local presence of gangs, guns and drug-dealing activity. Thus, specific characteristics of a neighbourhood, such as violent behaviour, weapon carrying and gang feuds on the streets can permeate school communities to support violent attitudes and behaviours. For instance, a study that addressed possible cross-cultural differences in children’s moral appraisals in relation to the task of putting themselves into the role of the bully in a bullying scenario, found that children from southern Italy attributed higher attitudes of moral disengagement (i.e., pride and indifference) to themselves in comparison to the Spanish participants (Menesini et al., 2003). The authors suggest that specific

characteristics of southern Italy, such as, high unemployment, the strong presence of organized crime, which is almost accepted as a normal event in everyday life, and ‘Mafia-like feelings’ which often pervade school communities, people’s habits and behaviours, can easily support attitudes of moral disengagement.

The fourth level of the ecological model looks at the wider societal factors that influence rates of violence. These include prevailing social and cultural norms that support violence as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts, norms that give priority to parental rights over child welfare, norms that entrench male dominance over women and children, norms that support the use of excessive force by police against citizens, and norms that support political conflict. For instance, it has been suggested that schools tend to perpetuate typically male values, which are in opposition to the development of empathic responses to others (Askew, 1989; Carter, 2002). As an example, based on a four-year action research project in an all boys’ comprehensive, Carter (2002) examined the dynamics of classroom relationships, perceptions of rights and constructions of male identities. Based on her findings she argued that attitudes and behaviours (e.g., aggressive interplay, low-level verbal and emotional harassment, overt racism, open peer criticism) which explicitly espoused competition and masculinity were prevalent and reinforced by implicit practices and subtle encouragement (e.g., minimal help for pupils experiencing problems). Furthermore, there seemed to be reluctance among the staff to intervene in conflicts (e.g., in the corridors), thereby compounding assumptions of acceptability.

Other societal factors, such as the health, educational, economic and social policies that maintain high levels of economic or social inequality between groups in society,



are also included at this level. As an example, a nationwide study carried out in the Republic of Ireland found that in both primary and secondary schools designated as ‘disadvantaged’ (achieved on the basis of socio-economic and educational indicators such as unemployment levels, housing, medical card holders, and information on basic literacy and numeracy skills), significantly more pupils reported that they had bullied others than did pupils from ‘advantaged’ schools (O’ Moore, Kirkham, & Smith, 1997).

This ecological framework emphasizes the interactions of an individual in its changing environment and the relationships among multiple settings in which children find themselves. However, Rogoff (2003) argues that this perspective constrains notions of relationships between individuals and social and cultural processes.

### *1.3.3 A Socio-cultural Perspective*

While the ecological framework serves to illustrate the multiple causes of violence and the interaction of risk factors operating within the family, community, social, cultural and economic contexts, the emergent socio-cultural perspective, derived from neo-Vygotskian theory, serves to explain conflict in terms of differing cultural practices and traditions between communities that maintain interpersonal and institutional prejudice and hostilities (Rogoff, 2003). From this perspective, bullying can be explained in terms of the dissimilarities in historical and cultural norms of different social groups, such as those defined by gender, ethnicity, or social class (Rigby, 2003b), which can affect the ways in which children learn to behave with one another.

According to Rogoff (2003), cultural observations systematically find boys being more physically aggressive than girls are, whereas girls more often engage in nurturing and caring behaviour. She suggests that the differences observed between girls and boys in social relations such as bullying and aggression reflect the gender roles expected of adults in many cultural communities, roles for which children from their earliest years are participating in and preparing to assume. Thus, socio-cultural stereotypes consign females to a passive and submissive role, whereas boys are expected to be aggressive and tough (Askew, 1989). Research into both the incidence and nature of bullying in school, participant roles in the bullying process, and the nature and effectiveness of peer support systems to address such behaviours supports this argument.

With regard to the incidence and nature of school bullying, numerous studies indicate that boys are more actively involved in bullying episodes than girls are. For example, Whitney and Smith (1993) found that boys tended to be bullied more than girls did, and boys admitted to bullying others more than girls did. In addition, boys were more involved in physical forms of bullying (e.g., hitting, threatening), while girls were more involved in verbal (e.g., name-calling) and indirect forms (e.g., social isolation, spreading rumours). Murray-Close et al. (2006) suggest that a cultural emphasis on the seriousness of aggression may socialize children to adopt differing views of the wrongness and harmfulness of physical aggression as compared with relational aggression. Results of a questionnaire study employing the *Moral Reasoning About Aggression (MRA)* scale, suggested that children rated physical aggression as more wrong and harmful than relational aggression, but more



frequently rated relational aggression, as opposed to physical aggression, as a moral issue (Murray-Close et al., 2006). In addition, they reported that physically aggressive behaviours were more likely to result in harm for the victims than relational aggression. The results indicated that participants overwhelmingly judged both physical and relational aggression from the moral domain, as opposed to the social-conventional domain. Furthermore, girls were more likely than boys were to approach questions of physical and relational aggression from the moral domain as opposed to the social-conventional domain, and girls more often than boys judged relational aggression, as opposed to physical aggression, from the moral domain. Murray-Close et al. (2006) concluded that, in making moral judgments, girls were more likely than boys were to focus on the harm that results from aggression, highlighting the importance of socialization and cultural influences on children's moral judgments of social behaviour (Gilligan, 1993; Rogoff, 2003; Turiel, 1998).

Evidence from studies to investigate participant roles in the bullying process, and the nature and effectiveness of peer support systems, further supports the assertion that responses to moral dilemmas are linked to socialization and gender role differences (Gilligan, 1993). Research into the distribution of participant roles revealed that girls were more pro-victim than boys were, that is, girls were most commonly assigned the role of Defender and Outsider, whereas boys were most frequently assigned the role of Bully, Assistant and Reinforcer (Salmivalli et al., 1996). In addition, in their study of the effectiveness of peer support systems to challenge bullying, Naylor and Cowie (1999) found that in mixed-sex schools, the majority (81%) of teacher supervisors of peer support systems and the majority of peer supporters (74%) were female. Interestingly, in the boys' schools that participated in the study, teachers

experienced more boys volunteering to become peer supporters for the school than the school was able to train and supervise. These findings suggest that in mixed-sex schools being labelled a peer supporter in front of girls may threaten boys' perceptions of masculinity; as a peer supporter they are expected to demonstrate the skills of empathy and listening (Naylor & Cowie, 1999).

Furthermore, Mills (2001) suggests that boys who are not prepared to engage in acts of physical violence in order to stand up for themselves are a popular target for bullying in schools as they represent a threat to constructions of masculinity.

Similarly, Rigby (2003b) suggests that bullies more readily target girls who deviate from the idealized construction of what it is to be feminine. Thus, studies of lesbian, gay and bisexual adults have revealed that this group of individuals are more likely to experience bullying at school. For example, in a three-year retrospective questionnaire survey of 190 lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-gendered adults regarding their experiences of bullying at school, the most frequently cited forms of bullying were verbal in nature, including name-calling (mostly related to their actual or *perceived* sexual orientation) and being ridiculed in front of others (Rivers, 2001).

A large number of participants also reported indirect bullying, in the form of being teased and having rumours spread about them. A majority of participants reported physical bullying, and a minority reported being sexually assaulted either by peers or by teachers at school (Rivers, 2001).

According to Davis (1998), one explanation for conflict in school, whether pupil-pupil, pupil-teacher, teacher-pupil, or teacher-teacher, is that it occurs between individuals attempting to impose their different cultures on each other. Boundaries



between cultural communities such as groups that have a long history of poor treatment of one by another or competition for resources, often maintain hostilities across generations (Rogoff, 2003). Thus, for children whose cultural traditions differ from those of the dominant communities, the role of interpersonal and institutional prejudice can be a source of conflict (Rogoff, 2003). While there is a dearth of research on racist bullying, data extrapolated from a number of studies has revealed that children from ethnic minority groups experience indirect bullying of a racist nature (e.g., Moran, Smith, Thompson, & Whitney, 1993; Whitney & Smith, 1993). For example, in a London-based study of children's views of teasing and fighting in junior schools involving 175 Black and White 11-year-olds, significantly more Black children than White children reported that they had been subjected to racist name-calling and verbal abuse, and over half agreed that racial teasing occurred at their school (Mooney, Creaser, & Blatchford, 1991).

Findings by Hewitt, Epstein, Leonard, Mauthner, & Watkins (2002) appear to support the notion that the values and social norms of schools influence ethnic and gendered bullying and violence. The results of their study found that schools were addressing sexism and racism to a limited extent but virtually ignoring the issue of homophobia. While some schools reported racist language and bullying, most supported a culture that was indifferent to racism, and one that was widely understood and largely endorsed by the pupil population. In addition, whereas only a few accounts of homophobic bullying involving violence were reported, homophobic name-calling, on the other hand, was widespread. While this was often dismissed by staff as meaningless, the authors suggest that its relationship to the construction and reproduction of gendered identities, and to the reproduced culture of masculine

aggression – boys being boys – could only be seen as supportive of homophobia. The authors also noted that a combination of aggressive masculine identities and homophobic bullying served to impact negatively upon the management of violence in school (Hewitt et al., 2002).

According to Rogoff (2003), the likelihood of misunderstanding and conflict are much greater with groups that have a long history of competition for resources or poor treatment of one by another. Thus, from a socio-cultural perspective school bullying can be explained in terms of conflict arising among social groups with different levels of power (Rigby, 2003b). The focus of school bullying is typically on differences that have a historical and cultural basis, such as gender, race and ethnicity, and social class (Rigby, 2003b).

#### *1.4 Summary*

This chapter has reviewed a range of methods documented in the existing research literature that have been employed to investigate the phenomenon of school bullying. The review has demonstrated that quantitative methods, such as questionnaires and surveys, have led to an accumulation of knowledge about bullying in school, including information about the nature and incidence of school bullying, children's choice of coping strategies and children's general attitudes to such behaviour. Furthermore, peer nomination and experimental methods have provided a means of summarizing some of the essential features of the experience of bullying in school, such as the participant roles that children adopt in the bullying process and their specific attitudes towards bullying according to the social conditions within which bullying takes place. In addition, this literature review has demonstrated that



qualitative methods, such as interviews combined with structured research activities and naturalistic observational studies, have extended our understanding about school bullying gained using quantitative methods. Current knowledge has been expanded to include types of bullying behaviour, behaviour and peer interactions in the playground, and children's participant roles in the bullying process. Furthermore, findings gathered from interviews have challenged researchers' understanding of the key characteristics that constitute school bullying. Finally, qualitative methods have offered new insights and perspectives into the phenomenon of school bullying, including knowledge about common childhood health problems associated with bullying, children's representations of the nature of the bullying relationship, and emotional attributions and coping styles considered for addressing bullying episodes.

Although the broad parameters of the phenomenon of bullying in school can be accessed using quantitative methods, such methods do not engage with the subjective content of children's lives and, therefore, conflict with the goal of arriving at an understanding of how children themselves construct and negotiate peer interactions in school (Gamliel et al., 2003; Greene & Hill, 2005). In contrast, qualitative methods, such as interviews and structured research activities, provide an approach to the study of children's experiences that seeks to discover children's perceptions of their own lived realities, the findings of which both challenge and expand existing adult constructions of knowledge and understanding regarding school bullying. Not only can such research approaches give voice to hitherto silenced individuals, they enable children to participate actively in the research process, recognizing them as having distinct perspectives of the world (Alldred, 1998). Therefore, the broad aim of this present programme of research was to engage children meaningfully as active

participants in the research process in order to explore their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices.

In addition to demonstrating that the use of qualitative methods and structured research activities both complements and extends existing knowledge about school bullying, this literature review has revealed a number of emergent research interests believed to be beneficial to the understanding of school bullying. Namely, children's perceptions and understanding of others' emotions in relation to bullying interactions, the role of the social group context in which bullying takes place, and children's views on strategies for addressing bullying.

To summarize, existing research on moral reasoning suggests that not only do children judge that it is morally wrong to hurt others or to treat others unfairly, they also perceive that aggression is wrong and harmful (e.g., Murray-Close et al., 2006; Shaw & Wainryb, 2006). Although evidence suggests that pro-victim attitudes tend to decrease with age (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Rigby & Slee, 1991), research findings from studies on general attitudes suggest that the majority of children are opposed to bullying and supportive of victims (e.g., Boulton & Underwood, 1992). Despite this evidence, substantial numbers of primary school children report being bullied, and bullying others, on a regular basis (Whitney & Smith, 1993). More worryingly, sadistic types of bullying have recently emerged as a sub-type of aggression, suggesting that some children experience positive arousal from inflicting harm on another (Bosacki et al., 2006). While it has been suggested that children's accurate understanding of others' emotions is likely to be an essential protective factor against bullying and aggression, relatively few studies have investigated



children's understanding of others' emotions in relation to bullying in school (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001; Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000; Murray-Close et al., 2006). Moreover, given that international research shows that bullying is a worldwide phenomenon, it is important to provide data from different societies and backgrounds (Almeida, Caurcel, & Machado, 2006). Therefore, one of the key objectives of the present programme of research was to extend and complement the previous work carried out by European researchers by exploring children's emotional attributions and moral reasoning in relation to school bullying, and their representations of the bullying relationship in a UK sample of primary school children.

In addition, one of the major limitations of previous research in this area is the focus on attributions to the bully (Menesini et al., 2003) or the bullies as a homogeneous group, and the victim (del Barrio et al., 2003), to the exclusion of other individuals in the bullying process. It has been argued that school bullying is collective in nature and based on social relationships within the group (Lagerspetz et al., 1982). Indeed, more recent evidence suggests that the social group context within which bullying takes place both promotes and sustains bullying behaviour (e.g., O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli, 2001; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Sutton & Smith, 1999). Research demonstrates that it is important to go beyond an exclusive focus on the victim/bully dyad and concentrate attention on the wider social group context that influences whether aggressive behaviour between group members will occur (DeRosier et al., 1994). Therefore, the second key objective of the present programme of research was to explore children's understanding of the role of the social group context in which school bullying takes place.

Seldom have researchers qualitatively explored the knowledge base of primary school children with regard to coping strategies for addressing bullying (Gamliel et al., 2003). Quantitative analyses of self-, teacher- and peer-report survey data or observational data underpin much of our current knowledge about potential approaches for coping with bullying. Hunter and Boyle (2004), however, note that, with one or two exceptions, these studies have focused on how children cope with general conflicts such as peer arguments rather than on how they cope with bullying specifically. In addition, such methods may not be sensitive to either the range or the combination of strategies that children employ to address bullying (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Moreover, Gamliel et al. (2003) argue that use of coping strategies is dependent upon how children understand and interpret their world, and not upon what observers perceive as an objective reality. del Barrio et al.'s (2003) European study, which employed open-ended questions in combination with cartoon drawings, is one of only a few qualitative studies that enabled children to speak for themselves about potential coping strategies for addressing bullying in school. Thus, the third key objective of the present programme of research was to develop and extend this research with a UK sample of primary school children and explore the coping strategies children consider using to address bullying in school.

Moreover, and in keeping with the principles underpinning the Children's Act (2004) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), I adopted child friendly methods that would give children the opportunity to be informed about participation, and involved and consulted regarding their understanding of school bullying, and ultimately heard. This approach was considered an appropriate means of



acknowledging that children are experts of their own lived experience, and an effective means of corresponding with and enhancing current research knowledge.

In summary, the broad aim of the present programme of research was to engage children meaningfully as active participants in the research process in order to explore their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices.

Specifically, this research had three key objectives:

- to explore children's emotional attributions and moral reasoning in relation to school bullying, and their causal understanding of the bullying relationship;
- to explore children's understanding of the role of the social group context in which school bullying takes place;
- to explore the coping strategies children consider using to address school bullying.

In order to meet the broad aim of this programme of research, I deemed it necessary to carry out an exploratory study, the overall aim of which was to explore the employment of child friendly protocols with primary school children that would support children's voluntary and active participation in the study of school bullying.

The exploratory study had three key objectives:

- to explore the presentation of an introduction session as a means of introducing myself to prospective participants and providing information about the study;

- to consult with children about what they need to effectively read and fully understand participant information materials regarding participation in research about school bullying;
- to explore the use of structured research activities for the active participation of children in the study of school bullying.

Hence, I commenced this programme of research with a study to explore the use of a number of practices and procedures that would support the engagement of children as competent participants in the research process. Drawing on examples from research conducted in schools, Chapter 2 presents a literature review of some of the methodological and ethical issues I considered for conducting research with children, paying particular attention to concerns surrounding access and recruitment, informed consent, confidentiality, data collection methods and data analysis. This is followed by details of the exploratory study in Chapter 3.



## CHAPTER 2

### Conducting Research with Children

#### *2.1 Overview*

In gathering the views of participants on bullying in school using qualitative methods and structured research activities, results demonstrate that what children themselves say may differ from adult perceptions of what children think or do (Hill, 2005). For example, Guerin and Hennessy's (2002) interview study to explore children's definitions of bullying has challenged the key characteristics of repetition and intention, widely accepted within the research community, raising questions about how effective school-based interventions can be if based on researcher definitions. Bosacki et al.'s (2006) study of children's bullying experiences using pictorial and narrative techniques suggests a sadistic sub-type of bullying, not currently documented in the literature, which challenges the efficacy of skills-based interventions that do not include a moral values component. These findings suggest that it is beneficial to employ qualitative methods and structured research activities in the study of bullying in school, to let children speak for themselves. Such methods not only enable children to define their own reality and challenge adult imposed constructions of the phenomenon (Veale, 2005), they also reflect the principles of children's rights, giving children a voice.

During the past fifteen years, there has been an increased demand in the (UK) for the recognition of children's rights both in terms of freedom of expression and in terms of participation. International and national initiatives, such as the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), the Government's recent Green Paper entitled *Every Child Matters* (Crown, 2003) and the Children Act (2004), recognize that children are individuals with the right to be consulted and taken account of, to have access to information, to have freedom of speech and opinion, and to challenge decisions made on their behalf. In parallel with this recent legal and political shift, there has emerged a new construction of childhood, which views children as social actors in their own right rather than as incomplete adults (Scott, 2000). From this perspective, an emphasis is placed upon children as active participants in the construction of their social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live, which challenges the notion that children are passive subjects of social structures and processes (McKechnie & Hobbs, 2004; Prout & James, 1997). This perception of the child impacts upon the status ascribed to child participants during the research process, which, in turn, has important methodological implications for research practice, for example, the choice of data collection, the interpretation and analysis of the data, and ethical considerations such as informed consent (Christensen & Prout, 2002; James, 1999).

An emergent contemporary interest in researching children's experience, perspectives and voice has resulted in a number of publications that address the issue of methodological and ethical approaches to research with children (e.g., Alderson & Morrow, 2004; Christensen & James, 2000a; Greene & Hogan, 2005; Lewis, Kellett, Robinson, Fraser, & Ding, 2004). However, despite the wealth of research carried out in relation to bullying in school, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, to date, very few authors in this field have discussed the methodological and ethical considerations of



their research with children. Prompted by the increased interest in children's rights, Chapter 2, therefore, reviews methodological and ethical considerations relevant to research with children, paying particular attention to issues of access and recruitment, informed consent, confidentiality, data collection methods and approaches to data analysis. In focusing on such considerations, the arguments presented here are in no way intended to devalue other methods (Hill, 2005), indeed, as Chapter 1 illustrated, a wide variety of methods have led to a valuable accumulation of knowledge about the scale and nature of bullying in school.

Drawing on research conducted in schools, the current programme of research adopted the position that children are active and competent participants in research. Hence, Section 2.3 (p. 68) examines selected procedures and practices that stand to support such engagement. Specifically, it considers issues of methodology and ethical concerns, such as, access and recruitment, informed consent, confidentiality, data collection and data analysis. First, Section 2.2 explores how my view of children reflected my choice of methodology and my response to ethical considerations in the study of children's understanding of school bullying.

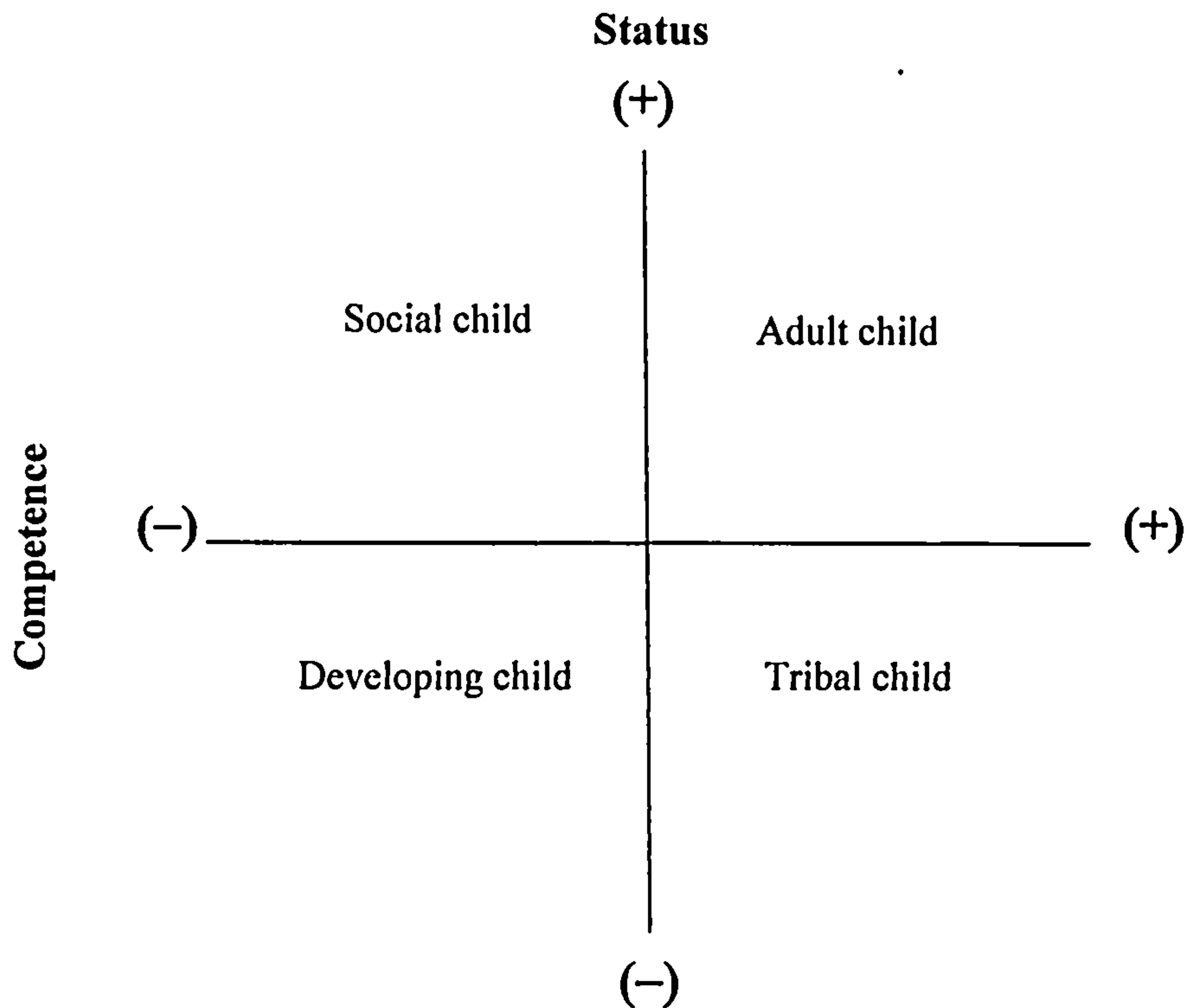
## 2.2 *Views of Children*

From a historical perspective, much research about children has "been on children as the objects of research rather than children as subjects, on child-related outcomes rather than child-related processes and on child variables rather than children as persons" (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 2). More recently, a shift in emphasis has resulted in an approach to engage in research *with* children as opposed to research *about* or *on* children (Fraser, 2004). This shift has had implications for the ways in which

research with children is conducted which, in turn, has impacted upon the manner in which the research question is approached, the findings are analysed, and the roles of the child and the researcher are conceived (Westcott & Littleton, 2005). Not only will the way a researcher perceives childhood and the status of children influence how research into children and childhood is carried out in terms of methodological and ethical considerations, but a researcher's views about child status will affect notions of power relations and how this impacts on the research process (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Punch, 2002b; Robinson & Kellett, 2004). For children to participate actively an acknowledgement is required of their status as social actors in their own right, together with an effort on the part of researchers to take seriously the power differentials between themselves and children and a desire to minimize these in the design, implementation and dissemination of their work (Robinson & Kellett, 2004). However, any discussion about the status of children in research is part of a broader discussion about children's status in society, that is, whether they are viewed as immature, dependent and in need of protection or whether they are perceived as active citizens with rights.

It has been argued that the way we, as researchers, define children and childhood, the perceptions we hold of children and their position in society, can only be known in relation to, and in contrast with, that of the adult (James, 1999). James (1999) has identified four overlapping ways of seeing the child: the developing child, the tribal child, the adult child and the social child (see Figure 2.1).





*Figure 2.1.* Images of the child in research (James, 1999).

From the *developing child* perspective, children are perceived as incompetent and lacking in status; the child is viewed as dependent and unable to deal appropriately with information (James, 1999; Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000; Robinson & Kellett, 2004). Christensen and Prout (2002, p. 481) take this further, stating that the child is “acted upon by others, rather than as a subject acting in the world”. In terms of research, children are perceived as objects of study to be observed, tested and experimented upon, where their behaviour, feelings and beliefs are interpreted as evidence of relative competence against those standards prescribed for adults (James, 1999). This view of the child assumes that children are unable to understand the nature and purpose of research and that they lack the ability to give informed consent or to participate in its design, implementation and interpretation (Christensen &

Prout, 2002). In addition, several concerns expressed about research with children relate to the perception that the data are unreliable, untrustworthy and idiosyncratic (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Greene & Hogan, 2005). The view of the child from this perspective emphasizes the role of adult accounts and adult perspectives (Robinson & Kellett, 2004).

The *tribal child* on the other hand is viewed as competently inhabiting an autonomous world separate from that of adults. This view of the child is based upon the assumption that children's status is considered to be different from that of adults while their social competencies are seen to be comparable (James, 1999). This position acknowledges the child as an individual with subjectivity, although the child is perceived as dependent and incompetent, requiring adult protection (Christensen & Prout, 2002). The child holds rights in terms of the provision of basic welfare and protection, but adults decide these: parents make decisions they feel are in the best interests of the children without consultation (Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000). From a research perspective, this view of a child's involvement in research is conditioned by age-based criteria such as cognitive abilities and social competencies (Christensen & Prout, 2002), such that "children's actions and thoughts are interpreted against models of psychological processes, stages of relative competence, and/or deviations from normality" (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000, p. 11). In addition, the power relationship in the research process is weighted towards the researcher as the expert on children: whom to study, how to study them and what to study (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000). Research methods from this perspective include ethnographic approaches such as participant observation.

While these two perspectives have a long-standing tradition within the study of children and childhood, they suggest that child participants are unable to have the same status as adult participants (Thomas & O’Kane, 2000). In contrast, and building upon the recommendations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) that children should be informed, consulted and involved in all activities that concern their lives, the *adult child* and the *social child* perspectives ensure that child participants are granted the same status as adult participants. From the adult child perspective, children’s status is comparable to that of adults, with children viewed as having different social competencies (James, 1999). Children are seen to “act, take part in, change and become changed by the social and cultural world in which they live” (Christensen & Prout, 2002, p. 418). Though the child is considered a participant in the adult decision-making process, with the right to be consulted regarding decisions made about them, they are nevertheless a participant in an adult-centred world (Lloyd- Smith & Tarr, 2000). A feature of the adult child perspective is that, in terms of the research process, researchers do not make an automatic distinction between adult and child participants. Rather, when it comes to choosing methods for working with children, the basic principle is as it would be with adult participants: the particular methods employed must suit the study sample, the research question, and the specific social and cultural context of the research (Christensen & Prout, 2002).

From the social child perspective, children’s status and social competencies are comparable with those of adults (James, 1999), such that children are perceived as active citizens with the right to choose and take action independently of parents and adults (Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000). This fourth approach considers children to be



active participants in the research process, comparable to adult participants, thus promoting the idea that children can be involved, informed, consulted, and therefore heard (Christensen & Prout, 2002). James (1999) suggests that one implication of the social child perspective for research is that researchers may capitalize on areas where children are *more* competent than adults. For example, using alternative forms of communication such as play, activities, songs, drawing and stories such that children, who are more practised in these types of activities, may experience the research process more meaningfully than if they were participating using a more traditional interview format. Indeed, Morrow and Richards (1996) contend that research from this perspective encourages different forms of communication, thereby engaging the researcher more effectively with the diversity of childhood experiences. It is with particular reference to the social child perspective that I approached the current programme of research.

While it is useful to categorize these four ways of ‘seeing’ children, it has been argued that these perspectives co-exist and that they do not form a neat, linear continuum; rather they can be used alongside each other in contemporary research (Christensen & Prout, 2002). However, the exercise of exploring the four ways of seeing the child aids an understanding of my own perceptions of childhood and the status of child participants, which, in turn, provides an explanation for both my choice of methodology and my response to ethical considerations to which this chapter now turns.



### 2.3 Research Implications

Viewing the participant in the research process from the social child perspective, that is, as an individual with the right to be heard, rather than as an object for concern and protection, has a real impact on research practice (Masson, 2004; Robinson & Kellett, 2004). For example, research must be designed and conducted to give children real choices about participation and to ensure that their views, perceptions and experiences are properly captured (Masson, 2004). In practice, this requires a research approach that acknowledges children's social and moral competencies and that seeks to enable them to exercise their rights to participation (Alderson & Goodey, 1996; Masson, 2004). This can be achieved in part by consideration of the law and children's legal rights and in part by ethical considerations. For example, Hill (2005, p. 80) offers what he terms a "rights perspective" to the consideration of ethical issues in terms of four distinct rights. Namely, welfare (the purpose of the research should contribute to the participants' wellbeing); protection (methods should be designed to avoid stress and distress); provision (children should feel good about having contributed to the research); and participation (children should make informed choices about voluntary participation). Good research practice also requires the consideration of the ethical standards of the relevant professional body, which with regard to the present programme of research was The British Psychological Society's *Code of conduct, ethical principles & guidelines* (BPS, 2000).

Insofar as the legal context is concerned, children are neither powerless nor without legal rights (for an overview see Masson, 2004). However, the BPS *Code of conduct, ethical principles and guidelines* (2000), the Code to which I was bound at

the time of data collection, did not provide specific guidelines for research with children (although there was a separate ten page Code for working with animals), thereby providing limited recognition of a child's right to the freedom of expression and the right to participation. Children were specifically referred to under the consent clause, which stated that children or participants with impairments required "special safe-guarding procedures" (Clause 3.2, pp. 8-9), although the Code did not state what these were. Thus, children were grouped together with "adults with impairments". In contrast, an approach to research with children that recognizes them as active participants challenges the notion that children and learning-disabled adults are a homogeneous group. Rather, a willingness to participate will be affected by a number of variables including individual preferences, personality characteristics (e.g., feeling shy), and a willingness to talk to adults, as well as demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender and ethnicity) (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Punch, 2002a). In order to consider the ethical and legal challenges arising from the view that children should be included as active participants in the research process, the following discussion will necessarily draw upon literature from a number of disciplines including psychology, law, childhood studies, education, and sociology. The discussion will focus on the research process in terms of five key issues: access and recruitment, informed consent, confidentiality, data collection methods and approaches to data analysis.

### *2.3.1 Access and Recruitment*

In order to obtain good quality data about children and childhood experiences, researchers need to develop ways of engaging children in a wide range of different settings and circumstances, including those from minority groups whose voices



would not otherwise be heard (Masson, 2004). However, the nature of children's socio-political position within society means that researchers are rarely able to approach children directly to request their participation in research, and children are rarely entirely free to decide for themselves whether to participate. Adults can withhold permission for children to be approached, thus denying them the opportunity to take part in the research if they so wish (Harker, 2002; Hood, Kelley, & Mayall, 1996; Masson, 2004). For reasons of child protection, adult 'gatekeepers' control both researchers' access to children and children's opportunities to participate (Harker, 2002; Masson, 2004). For example, in order to gain admission to a school to carry out her study, Solberg (1996) required consent at several different levels, including the Local Education Authority (LEA), the head teacher, the class teacher, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the children's parents. The children who were taking part in the research, however, were not asked to give their consent.

Access to child populations can be facilitated if researchers clearly communicate the purpose and value of the research, the trustworthiness of the researchers and the steps that will be taken to minimize any risk of harm resulting from participation (Harker, 2002). Information provided to the gatekeepers can assist them to negotiate opportunities on behalf of the researchers that allow children to decide for themselves whether to take part (Masson, 2004). For example, David, Edwards and Alldred (2001) distributed information leaflets as a means of introducing their study to head teachers and class teachers as they negotiated access to schools and to children, the aim of which was to 'sell' the research.

Furthermore, while it has been acknowledged that the role of parents, carers and organizations as gatekeepers to children is to ensure that children are protected from potential harm, over-protection challenges the notion of children's rights and raises important ethical questions concerning the exclusion of children from research participation (Alderson & Goodey, 1996; Alderson & Morrow, 2004; Hood et al., 1996; Morrow & Richards, 1996). For example, children who would like to participate in research may be denied the opportunity by their parents, carers or schoolteachers (Harker, 2002). The authority of gatekeepers can therefore conflict with the notion of a child's right to participation, in that the gatekeepers' duty to protect children takes precedence over the child's right to participate in the decision to participate (Hood et al., 1996). In most cases of research with children, access can only be negotiated within the framework of the hierarchy of gate keeping. The issue of access raises questions about how researchers can work towards reaching freely given informed consent from children (Hood et al., 1996). Given that the subject of my thesis is bullying in school, one of the aims of my research was to negotiate access to primary schoolchildren successfully via adult gatekeepers, in the first instance, using adult information packs. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.5.1 (p. 98).

### *2.3.2 Informed Consent*

With regard to informed consent, the question seems to be whether or not children are able to reflect upon, and take responsibility for, decisions about taking part in research, or whether their parents or carers should have and take responsibility for them. On the one hand, the BPS Code of Conduct (2000) states parents or those 'in loco parentis' should give their informed consent on behalf of children under sixteen



years of age. On the other hand, recent political and legal changes recognize children's rights, including the right to the freedom of expression and the freedom to participation. Thus, from an active participant perspective, the BPS Code (2000) is problematic in two respects. First, it supports the notion that children are perceived to be their parents' property, devoid of the right to participate in the decision about whether or not to participate in research (Morrow & Richards, 1996). Second, it suggests the notion of a developmental trajectory, that is, a linear, chronological and pre-determined process by which children become competent decision-making adults (Alldred, 1998). As researchers in the field of childhood studies point out, however, chronological age and competence is not the same thing (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Solberg, 1996). Even quite young children are capable of consenting to participate when information about research in general and the study in particular are given clearly and simply (Mahon, Glendinning, Clarke, & Craig, 1996; Masson, 2004).

Thus, while it is currently necessary to ask a range of adult gatekeepers for consent to work with children, there is a growing acknowledgement that children themselves must give informed consent to be included in research (for example, National Children's Bureau, 2003). Indeed, researchers have suggested that involving children in the decision-making process about whether or not to take part in a research project can be seen as a useful experience in and of itself, giving children a sense of control over their own individuality, autonomy and privacy (Edwards & Alldred, 1999).

Much of the literature about informed consent and research with children is concerned with issues of power. Whether to treat children as passive objects who are

incompetent and therefore unable to give their informed consent to participate, or whether to treat them as active participants in the research process, thus respecting their rights to participation and freedom of expression. Several themes regarding informed consent emerge from a review of the literature. First, the notion that the presentation of clear and unambiguous information to potential participants will enable children to make an informed decision about whether or not to consent to participation (Edwards & Alldred, 1999; Morrow & Richards, 1996). Second, the need to adopt a principle of consent that depends upon active agreement on the part of the child and passive agreement on the part of the adult (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). Third, the need for researchers to recognize that consent is context specific and as such may conflict with the notion of voluntary participation and the right to withdrawal (Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992). Finally, the idea that in practice informed consent should be recognized as an ongoing process (David et al., 2001); and (e) the issue of confidentiality (Masson, 2004; Morrow & Richards, 1996; Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). These themes will be discussed with reference to researchers from a range of disciplines working with children in the school setting.

It has been argued that a child’s ability to give informed consent to participation will be informed by their understanding of the research topic within the context of their individual lives (Edwards & Alldred, 1999; Goodenough, Williamson, Kent, & Ashcroft, 2004; Morrow & Richards, 1996). Therefore, in order for children to give their informed consent, a number of researchers advocate the provision of full information about the nature and purpose of the research, what their involvement will entail, the intended outcomes of the research, and confidentiality (Davis, 1998; Hill, Laybourn, & Borland, 1996; Mahon et al., 1996; Masson, 2004; Morrow & Richards,



1996). In order to provide information to potential participants, researchers working with children have adopted a number of different methods including information leaflets, information packs, and introductory sessions. For example, some researchers have utilized information leaflets to introduce the research aims, method, and location, and the issue of confidentiality (David et al., 2001; Punch, 2002a). Others have made use of an information pack, providing information in both paper and tape formats and activity sheets, as well as information leaflets for parents and carers (O’Kane, 2000).

Introductory sessions have also been employed as a means of imparting information to whole classes. For example, David et al. (2001) used introductory sessions in order to inform potential participants of the subject matter of the research in the hope that children would be better informed to decide if they might participate. However, the researchers acknowledge that carrying out introductory sessions during school hours meant that it could potentially be perceived by children as part of the curriculum and thus as education, the notion of which carries with it the risk of coercion rather than voluntary participation (David et al., 2001). Another disadvantage of introductory sessions is that of involving children in research activities before they have actually consented to take part (Edwards & Alldred, 1999). For example, introductory sessions have been used to introduce both the research team and as a means to illustrate practically the topic of the research through a series of brainstorming and discussion activities before asking each participant to complete a consent form (Edwards & Alldred, 1999).



A review of the literature suggests that if researchers are to acknowledge the competence of children then there is a need to adopt a principle of consent that depends upon the active agreement on the part of the child and a passive agreement on the part of the gatekeeper (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). Such an approach not only gives children the maximum opportunity to agree freely to participation, it also avoids the exclusion of those children whose parents or carers have not consented on their behalf (Hill et al., 1996; Masson, 2004). For example, in a study focusing on the experiences of child carers, parents were asked only for their permission to make contact with their children, before the child was approached directly for their consent (Mahon et al., 1996). A separate approach was then made to the child to seek his or her consent, with each child asked again at the start of the interview whether he or she was willing to take part (Mahon et al., 1996). This contrasts with a study involving primary school children in interviews about their emotions and well-being, in which consent was gained from parents via the school (Hill et al., 1996). It was only when the researchers arrived at the school to carry out the interviews that they were able to inform the children face to face of the purpose and implications of the study. At this point, the children were asked whether they understood the nature of the research and whether they were agreeable to participating. Clearly, it is not easy for a child to withdraw at this stage especially if the arrangement has been made by key adults who have power and whom they usually respect (Hill et al., 1996). This example also highlights the issue of voluntary participation and the right to withdraw.

If consent is to be given freely, care needs to be taken to ensure that children do not feel obliged to participate (Masson, 2004). Children need to understand that

participation in research is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw at any time during the research process (Davis, 1998). Thus, children who are required to participate in research located in the school setting may not feel in a position to dissent, both because of the differential power relations and because most school-based tasks and activities are usually compulsory (Morrow & Richards, 1996).

Where the person seeking children's participation is in a position of institutional authority, as in the case of a teacher or carer, children may feel that they have to agree or, worse still, that they will be penalized if they do not (Masson, 2004).

Researchers need to be alert to such possibilities, particularly where those who provide services for children arrange their access (Masson, 2004). For example, in Mahon et al.'s (1996) child carer study outlined above, it was made clear to all of those who were approached initially and again at the beginning of the interview that they were under no obligation to participate and of their right to refuse. Given that the researcher may have been regarded as an authority figure, they were also made aware that participation was not something that was expected and children who did not want to be interviewed either refused outright or did not keep appointments (Mahon et al., 1996). This contrasts with Eslea and Smith's (2000) study on primary school bullying in which children were informed about the purpose of the study immediately prior to data collection and advised that "although their parents had consented they could still withdraw from the study if they wished" (Eslea & Smith, 2000, p. 211). Interestingly, none did so and one may question whether this was due to the subtle coercive effects of their knowing that their parents had agreed.

A truly voluntary approach to informed consent contrasts with the general experience of most children in school, particularly in the classroom, which is one of compulsory



participation in the life and work of the school (David et al., 2001). In this context, it has been argued that informed consent to research conducted within school time and in class may be coercive; children perceive participation as just another form of schoolwork and, as such, assume that they are obliged to participate (Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992). In their article which presents data on pupils' perceptions of participating in a questionnaire survey about alcohol, tobacco and drug use, Denscombe and Aubrook (1992) suggest that, while pupil participation was 'voluntary', it was not 'completely voluntary'. Analysis of the results suggested that participants took their participation for granted, with a refusal to co-operate an option that they had not considered. Denscombe and Aubrook (1992) suggest that research within the school context is inscribed by certain basic power relations between teachers and pupils and, as such, makes it difficult for children to opt out of research participation. They argue that the high pupil response rates achieved in school-based research are embedded within the hidden pressure of conducting research in the context of the school and classroom (Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992). In an effort to overcome this hidden pressure to participate, one strategy that has been employed is the distribution of consent forms with 'tick boxes' for children to indicate whether or not they wish to participate, which are returned to the researchers confidentially in post boxes at the end of the introductory session (David et al., 2001).

It may also be useful to consider consent as an ongoing process negotiated over time rather than as a one-off event at the outset, through offering children the opportunity to withdraw from research at any stage, either temporarily or permanently (Alderson, 2004; Edwards & Alldred, 1999; Morrow & Richards, 1996). In their research with children in educational settings, David et al. (2001) made it clear that children were



being asked to opt in to the study rather than to opt out. Informed consent was treated as a process, rather than as a single event, and the researchers checked that participants wished to continue to take part in the research at each stage of their involvement.

Informing and actively involving children in the consent process not only respects their rights and reduces the risk of harm, it is also more likely to improve the quality of the research and, thus, the findings (Alderson, 2004; Alderson & Morrow, 2004). Those researchers who have carefully explained their research plans and methods to participants are more likely to improve the aims, theories and methods of their research (Alderson, 2004; Alderson & Morrow, 2004). In addition, when researchers provide clear information to children, this can also help gatekeepers to make more informed decisions about whether their child should participate (Alderson & Morrow, 2004; David et al., 2001). Furthermore, children who have given their voluntary and informed consent are less likely to withdraw from research and less likely to sabotage their responses (Alderson & Morrow, 2004; Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992). Finally, researchers who respect children's rights and their informed consent are more likely to feel accountable to their participants and take their views more seriously (Alderson & Morrow, 2004). As a consequence of the preceding discussion, the present programme of research attempted to utilize procedures, such as introduction sessions, information materials and informed consent questionnaires, which would maximize the opportunities for children to actively grant their informed consent, or comfortably decline participation. These will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.4 (p. 96) and Section 3.5 (p. 98).

### 2.3.3 Confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality are important ethical issues in any research and especially in relation to the power imbalance between children and adults and, as such, need to be clearly explained to, and agreed with, prospective participants (Davis, 1998; Masson, 2004; Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). Factors such as when and where the research takes place, who will be present, and who will be told, are all likely to have an effect on a child’s consent to participate and their responses during the research process (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). One issue for consideration is the context in which the data will be collected (Mahon et al., 1996; Morrow & Richards, 1996). The school context, for example, is a place for children to learn but which is organized and controlled by adults. Therefore, research conducted in school needs to take into account that children may feel under pressure not only to participate, but to give socially desirable responses to research questions (Punch, 2002b). Once access has been negotiated, obtaining a separate space away from the classroom or the main family room can be a sensitive issue: adults who see themselves as protecting children do not always recognize a child’s right to privacy and therefore may not recognize the need for a private space for an interview (Mauthner, 1997). In addition, adult spaces dominate society so it can be difficult to find spaces in which to conduct research with children where they feel comfortable, private and in control (Masson, 2004; Punch, 2002b). While public spaces such as are found at home, at school, or in the playground allow the research to be observed but not overheard, a private space with minimal interruptions is likely to be most conducive for productive data gathering and confidentiality (Masson, 2004; O’Kane, 2000). This is often problematic in schools, where time is restricted to lesson periods and private space is in high demand (Mauthner, 1997; Punch, 2002a). For example,



Goodenough et al. (2003) declined the offer of the Staff Room, as they considered it an unsuitable location due to problems with confidentiality and with the children feeling that they were in an ‘adult’ space rather than a ‘child’ space. Declining the Staff Room resulted in the researchers being offered the Resource Room, in reality a small space used as a walk-in storeroom (Goodenough et al., 2003). Although this room was practically difficult for the researchers to work in, the children thought that meeting in such a space was amusing and any difficulties with equipment and seating arrangements helped to reduce any sense that the researchers were ‘in charge’, thus minimizing the power differential (Goodenough et al., 2003).

According to Morrow and Richards (1996), children should be entitled to the same degree of confidentiality and anonymity as adult participants. However, Mahon et al., (1996) suggest that there appears to be an emerging consensus amongst researchers that complete confidentiality can never be guaranteed to child research participants. The National Children’s Bureau (2003), for example, takes the view that there are limitations to confidentiality in terms of protection; if the child discloses that he, she or others are at risk of significant harm, they suggest that the researcher has a duty to pass on such information to the appropriate professionals. If researchers feel that disclosure of information is necessary, Alderson and Morrow (2004) recommend that the limitations of confidentiality are clearly explained and discussed with the child prior to data collection at the time that informed consent is sought. This concurs with the BPS Code (2000, Clause 7.1, p. 10) which states that “information obtained about a participant during an investigation is confidential unless otherwise agreed...in advance of agreeing to participate”. The Code (2000) further states that any information provided by participants, if published, will not be



identifiable as theirs. In practice, Masson (2004) suggests that the location where the research took place should not be identified, participant anonymity should be ensured (e.g., by using pseudonyms), and facts which otherwise might identify participants should be changed or omitted. The present programme of research subscribed to the view that no participants and participating schools would be named or identifiable in any reporting or discussion of the findings.

However, the notion that complete confidentiality can ever be offered presents the researcher with a dilemma: on the one hand offering children the same degree of confidentiality and privacy as adult participants and, on the other, protecting the child from significant harm (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). In practice a number of strategies, depending on whether child participants are viewed as “passive objects of concern rather than as active moral agents in their own right”, have been employed (Alderson & Morrow, 2004, p.50). For example, Mahon et al. (1996) guaranteed confidentiality with the proviso that, should it emerge during an interview that a child was at risk, the researcher might have to inform a third party (Mahon et al., 1996). On the other hand, some researchers offer complete confidentiality based on the premise that children have the autonomy to decide what they say and to whom (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). Thomas and O’Kane (1998) decided that it was important that they gave their participants the assurance that they would not repeat what they had been told to others, and that the children should know that the researchers were trustworthy. If information indicated that the child was being harmed, the researchers decided that it would be their responsibility to support the child in telling someone who was in a position to do something about it (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). My perception of the child as a social actor in the research

encounter influenced my employment of a similar strategy, that is, I offered participants complete confidentiality in the hope that participants would view me as trustworthy. In the event that a participant disclosed potential harm, I decided that I would discuss with them what strategy they would like to pursue (Morrow & Richards, 1996) (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5.2, p. 99).

#### *2.3.4 Data Collection Methods*

Across many research disciplines, there is a growing recognition that “children’s lives are complex and multi-faceted and...that every child has an individual and unique experience of his or her childhood” (Green & Hogan, 2005, p. xi).

Approaches and methods of research that respect this individuality and diversity in children and childhood experience in the main tend to be qualitative since:

The aim of qualitative research is to understand and represent the experiences and actions of people as they encounter, engage, and live through situations. In qualitative research, the researcher attempts to develop understandings of the phenomena under study, based as much as possible on the perspective of those being studied. (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999, p. 216)

Moving away from a philosophical approach to understanding that subscribed to a positivist position, whereby knowledge acquisition was gained by imitating the natural sciences, this view of qualitative research contrasts with quantitative methods (Robson, 2002). In recent years, research on children and childhood experience has been influenced by the emergence of a new sociology of childhood, the aim of which is to gain insight into children’s experiences (Prout & James, 1997). From this



perspective, qualitative research approaches have been emphasized. McKechnie (2002) suggests that there is a parallel between the emphasis placed upon such techniques in research with children, and the role of such qualitative methods within feminist research. Indeed, Alldred (1998) holds that the current awareness to recognize children as active participants, and the desire to hear the voices of children, is similar in character to earlier struggles of other socially silenced groups, such as, the voices of women, of ethnic minority groups, of lesbians and gay men, of people with disabilities, and of people with learning difficulties. However, McKechnie (2002, p. 52) notes that, "to fixate on qualitative approaches is to limit the scope of the researcher". Rather he argues for researchers to adopt a method that reflects the nature of the research question. He further suggests that by combining quantitative and qualitative methods fuller insight regarding the research topic is possible.

By employing a variety of research techniques that allow children to feel part of the research process researchers are not only able to minimize the power imbalance between adult and child, they can also increase the value of the research in terms of validity and reliability (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). New ways of engaging children in research requires the development and application of methods that involve negotiation rather than imposition (Hill et al., 1996). Ideally, this would entail children playing a substantial part in setting the research agenda and planning the research design. However, the reality of the nature of funding applications and ethical approval, for example, means that researchers rarely have the freedom to explore issues unless they are adult-initiated and adult-led (Hill et al., 1996; Morrow & Richards, 1996).



Some researchers argue that because children are unfamiliar with the social science tradition of face-to-face interviews and standard measurement tools such as questionnaires, traditional research methods are not suitable for researching children and childhood experiences (e.g., Davis, 1998; Punch, 2000a; Scott, 2000). The literature suggests that interviewing children and the use of standard questionnaire techniques with younger children pose particular methodological problems in terms of language, literacy, cultural, age and ability limitations. Therefore, researchers need to employ different techniques because children have different competencies and preferences (Davis, 1998; Scott, 2000; Thomas & O’Kane, 1998).

An effective way of carrying out research with children is to combine traditional adult research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, with techniques considered more suitable for use with children (Punch, 2000b). For example, (a) written techniques such as list and sentence compilation exercises (Harden, Scott, Backett-Milburn, & Jackson, 2000; Hill et al., 1996) or worksheets (Hill et al., 1996; Punch, 2002b); (b) verbal techniques such as storytelling (Mauthner, 1997), reading and commenting on vignettes (Harden et al., 2000), and making tape recordings (Young & Barrett, 2001); (c) visual techniques such as drawings (Mauthner, 1997; Punch, 2002b), chart completion (Christensen & James, 2000b; Hill et al., 1996), mental mapping (Young & Barrett, 2001), taking photographs (Punch, 2002b; Young & Barrett, 2001), using photographs and faces to stimulate discussion (Hill et al., 1996; Young & Barrett, 2001), or card sorting (Harden et al., 2000; Mauthner, 1997); and, (d) other techniques such as role plays (Hill et al., 1996), or reading books and playing games (Mauthner, 1997).

Another approach that enables young people to take an active role in the research process and that provides a framework for them to talk about their perceptions, opinions and experiences, is the use of participatory methods such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA; Morrow & Richards, 1996; O'Kane, 2000; Steiner, 1993; Theis, 1996). A wide-range of participatory methods exists (e.g., Masheder, 1997; Pretty, Guijt, Thompson, & Scoones, 1995; Steiner, 1993) which can be adapted and used in a variety of ways, both independently and alongside more traditional methods, including grouping and ranking exercises, spider diagrams, and activity tables (Punch, 2002b; Thomas & O'Kane, 2000). According to Punch (2002a), the challenge for researchers working with children is to recognise their competencies, maintain their interest and keep the research familiar and relevant to them in a non-patronizing manner.

The use of structured research activities is particularly appropriate for research with children. These activities capitalize upon children's strengths rather than their weaknesses thereby allowing children with different competencies and preferences to take part (Clark, 2004). They can be used to work with children of different ages and abilities, and they can be adapted to suit different languages and cultures (O'Kane, 2000; Punch, 2002a; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). They provide children with space and time to think about what they want to express, and talk freely about issues that concern them, without creating pressure for them to respond quickly with the 'correct' answer (Punch, 2002a; 2002b; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Further, for those children who have limited experience of direct communication with unfamiliar adults in a formal interview situation and who might find the experience intimidating, the use of structured research activities helps create a relaxed

atmosphere, and rapport, which is therefore likely to increase participants' confidence (Hood et al., 1996; Punch, 2002a). Creating rapport will not only encourage children to talk more freely and honestly, it will help with building trust concerning confidentiality (Harden et al., 2000; Kellett & Ding, 2004). Furthermore, it has been suggested that structured research activities help to minimize the power differential between adult researcher and child participant (Kellet & Ding, 2004; O'Kane, 2000; Punch, 2002a; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998).

However, the use of structured research activities is not without its limitations and Veale (2005) suggests that these kinds of methods can hide inequitable participation. For example, 'low status' children (for whatever reasons status is ranked by the group, whether by socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, or popularity) may not participate equally with 'high status' children in the research. Furthermore, such methods can generate a false consensus and take for granted ongoing consent whereby, for example, children may engage passively with the methods and therefore participate less fully, which may be linked to motivational and trust issues or which may be a form of withdrawing consent (Veale, 2005). In addition, employing such methods requires skill and flexibility on the part of the researcher in terms of facilitating children's participation without patronizing them, facilitating their ability to communicate effectively and enjoy being involved, managing the activities, while at the same time also managing challenging behaviour without contributing to the power inequalities between researcher and participant (Punch, 2002b).

In the context of the current programme of research, combining structured research activities with traditional methodologies was deemed an appropriate approach, both



in terms of the sample and in terms of the subject under investigation, that is, children's understanding of school bullying. Structured research activities were selected for a number of reasons. They were considered to promote methods of communication that children would find more meaningful, thereby enabling participants to take the lead in discussions rather than simply responding to questions; it was thought that they would provide a range of opportunities for children to express their views and make a valid contribution regardless of age, ethnic minority, literacy or disability level; and it was perceived they would position children at the heart of the research process, thus breaking down the imbalance of power between researcher and researched, such that an atmosphere would be created in which there were no right or wrong answers (Harker, 2002; O'Kane, 2000; Sellers & Westerby, 1996; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Furthermore, in terms of the exploring children's understanding of bullying in school, combining structured research activities with qualitative methods was considered most suitable for addressing some of the limitations in our present knowledge as outlined in Chapter 1. These will be discussed in further detail in Chapters 3 and 5.

### *2.3.5 Data Analysis Considerations*

In listening to the voices of children, as well as considering the power differentials between participant and researcher and the impact of this on methodological and ethical issues outlined in previous sections of this chapter, the means of data analysis and representation also need to be taken into account (Edwards & Ribbens, 1998). Alldred and Burman (2005, p. 188) claim that the analysis and presentation of data are areas where the people researched have least power, stating that "the process of analysis, writing and reporting privilege the researcher's own perspective, since in

producing an account we have interpretive, authorial and editorial authority”.

However, while the methodological and ethical issues outlined earlier have received a large amount of attention in the literature, with one or two exceptions, there is a dearth of material on the practices underlying the retention of research participants’ voices in the phases of data analysis and writing up. Nevertheless, a number of researchers in the field of childhood experience advocate the notion of reflexivity in qualitative research (e.g. Woodhead, 1998), that is, the practice of reflecting upon and critically evaluating the research topic, design, and process, together with the personal experience of conducting the research (Merrick, 1999). Mauthner and Doucet (1998) highlight the process of reflexivity in the data analysis phase as critical, given that it is often at this stage that the voices and perspectives of participants are particularly vulnerable. For example, during data analysis researchers make choices and decisions about which issues to focus on, about how to interpret participants’ words and about which quotations to select for writing up.

Davis (1998) argues for the employment of reflexive techniques in research with children in order to ensure that the analysis and interpretation of the data are not influenced by the researcher’s academic and professional preconceptions, for example, their theoretical orientation, ethics and research methods, or by their personal and cultural prejudices, values and beliefs. Wilkinson (1988) identifies three types of reflexivity: personal, functional and disciplinary. “Personal reflexivity” involves reflecting upon how the researcher’s own identity, personal interests and values impacts upon the research process, “functional reflexivity entails continuous, critical examination of the practice/process of research to reveal its assumptions, values, and biases”, and “disciplinary reflexivity” involves “analysis of



the nature and influence of the field of enquiry" (p. 493). One means of achieving reflexivity, for example, is to keep a journal that documents the route by which the analysis and interpretation were reached (McKeechnie, 2002) (see Chapter 3, Section 3.7.2, p. 107).

However, in an attempt to ensure that the voices of participants are heard and represented, while endeavouring to reduce the power differentials between researchers and researched, Mauthner and Doucet (1998) hold that despite adopting such transparent methods researchers have to accept that in the process of data transformation, accounts are changed and infused with their identity. Indeed, even at the transcription stage, by editing out the 'ums' and the 'ahs', and the interviewer's 'yeahs' it has been argued that we homogenize participants' voices, causing them to all read the same (Standing, 1998). By tidying up the transcripts, researchers remove participants' distinctive ways of speaking, ways that serve to reflect their individual backgrounds and cultures, thus making standard English the 'normal' means of communication. Standing (1998) suggests that by doing this we further negate our participants' voices because by editing what they have said we are complying with the dominant cultural voice. She further argues that however equal the methods of access and interviewing, researchers hold the real power by virtue of the fact that they take participants' private words into the public world of academia. Researchers are in a more powerful position than their participants are, given their opportunities to represent the data, whether in the form of a written text, a thesis, a report, a journal article or a book. They decide which parts of the data to use, how to interpret their participants' words, what to use the research for, and what language to use in the writing up (Standing, 1998). Indeed, Alldred (1998) argues that since representation



of data is through language, marginalized and less powerful groups such as children are represented by the dominant cultural voice that is not their own, that is, a language reflective and productive of adult power, status and authority. In recognition that the issue of power differentials between researcher and researched continued beyond data collection into the analysis and representation phases of the research process (Alldred, 1998; Standing, 1998), I adopted, where possible, a qualitative approach to data analysis. In particular, I employed a qualitative content analysis and the voice-centred relational method (Brown, Debold, Tappan, & Gilligan, 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller, & Argyris, 1989). These methods will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.7 (p. 106) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (p. 185).

## *2.4 Summary*

From a historical perspective, research conducted with children has been dominated by approaches that view children as objects of research rather than as active participants, with the focus on outcomes rather than processes and on child variables rather than children as individuals (Greene & Hill, 2005). More recently, research has seen a shift toward a view of children as social actors and competent participants, a move that requires a commitment to listening to and hearing their accounts, and respecting their rights to participation. Such a view affects the status ascribed to children in the research process, which in turn influences considerations of power differentials between researcher and participant and how these shape the research encounter in terms of design, implementation and dissemination. Hence, not only does the view of the child as social actor influence the strategies that researchers employ to provide children with the opportunity to take an active role in the research

process, it further impacts upon the ethical and methodological approach that researchers take with regard to establishing contact with and recruiting prospective participants (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). Drawing on examples of research in the school setting, this chapter has reviewed a number of practices and procedures that may support the voluntary and active engagement of children in research.

With regard to establishing contact with and recruiting participants, this chapter has demonstrated that researchers have adopted a number of procedures and practices. While access to children in the school setting can only be negotiated through a hierarchy of adult gatekeepers in the first instance, the opportunities for recruiting children can be maximized with the use of adult information packs and information leaflets. In addition, this chapter has shown that a number of strategies can facilitate children’s opportunities for voluntary participation including the provision of full information about the research through, for example, introductory sessions and information leaflets, and the adoption of an informed consent process that requires the active and ongoing consent of the child. Furthermore, in terms of confidentiality this review has made evident the need for children to be offered the same assurances of anonymity and confidentiality as adult participants. Finally, this chapter has demonstrated that a commitment to listening to and hearing children’s voices entails the employment of a variety of methods of data collection, such that children of all levels and abilities can make a valid and meaningful contribution to the research. Moreover, this chapter has shown that the choices a researcher makes with regard to analysis and presentation of the data can ensure that children’s voices are heard and accurately represented.

Influenced by the new sociology of childhood, I was eager to learn about children's understanding of bullying in primary school, from the children themselves. Not only did I regard children as competent, capable and effective reporters of their own lived experience, I perceived them as active participants in the research process, with real choices about participation. In taking this view, my commitment as a researcher was to adopt methods that would respect children's rights to participation and enable me to listen to and hear their accounts. In order to achieve this, I adopted a number of strategies that would give children the opportunity to be informed, involved, consulted and heard. These included practices that would (a) maximize voluntary participation of children within the school setting, such as introduction sessions, (b) treat informed consent as an on-going process requiring the active consent of the child, and (c) employ data collection methods that would enable children to play an active part in the research encounter.

Thus, the broad aim of this programme of research was to engage children meaningfully as active participants in the research process in order to explore their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices. In addition, to facilitate this overall aim, I considered it necessary to carry out an exploratory study to explore the employment of child friendly protocols with primary school children that would support children's voluntary and active participation in the study of school bullying. The exploratory study had three key objectives:

- to explore the presentation of an introduction session as a means of introducing myself to prospective participants and providing information about the study;



- to consult with children about what they need to effectively read and fully understand participant information materials regarding participation in research about school bullying;
- to explore the use of structured research activities for the active participation of children in the study of school bullying.

## CHAPTER 3

### Exploratory Study Method

#### *3.1 Overview*

In adopting the view that children are social actors, I sought to engage children meaningfully as active participants in the research process in order to explore their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices. From this perspective, I considered children's status and social competencies as comparable to those of adult participants, such that I wished to demonstrate my respect for their rights to voluntary participation, and to reflect a commitment to listening to and hearing their accounts. Influenced by the new sociology of childhood, I adopted a number of practices and procedures that supported the idea that children can be informed, involved, consulted, and therefore heard. These included (a) practices that would maximize voluntary participation of children within the school setting, such as, the use of information materials and introduction sessions, (b) strategies that would treat informed consent as an on-going process requiring the active consent of the child, and (c) the employment of data collection methods that would enable children to play an active part in the research encounter.

Since I was not in possession of age-appropriate information materials with which to aid the voluntary recruitment of children, and given that I wished to trial the introduction session and the use of structured research activities, I believed it necessary to conduct an exploratory study. The broad aim of the exploratory study was to explore the employment of child friendly protocols with primary school

children that would support children's voluntary and active participation in the study of school bullying. Specifically, the exploratory study had three objectives:

- to explore the presentation of an introduction session as a means of introducing myself to prospective participants and providing information about the study;
- to consult with children about what they need to effectively read and fully understand participant information materials regarding participation in research about school bullying;
- to explore the use of structured research activities for the active participation of children in the study of school bullying.

It was my intention that trialling the presentation of an introduction session and the use of structured research activities would inform adjustments to the design and implementation of these methods in the subsequent studies. Furthermore, I expected that the consultation with children regarding what they need to effectively read and fully understand participant information would facilitate the design and production of age-appropriate materials to aid the voluntary recruitment of participants in the subsequent studies. The remainder of this chapter describes the methodology for the exploratory study in more detail and Chapter 4 presents the results.

### *3.2 Design*

Mixed-gender focus group discussions combined with structured research activities provided the main means of data collection. Focus groups were conducted one week apart to consider what children need to effectively read and fully understand



participant information materials: one to consider content and the other to consider appearance. The day preceding data collection, I presented an introduction session to each class to provide information about the research to prospective participants.

### *3.3 Participants*

Children were drawn from a state primary school situated in a south-west London Local Education Authority (LEA). Following parental permission to approach their child, all pupils from Year 5/6 and Year 6 (52) were invited to participate in the study at the introduction session (see below); of these, 46 (23 girls, 23 boys) consented to take part. In actuality, not all volunteers were available to participate due to absence (e.g., due to sickness, music lessons, secondary school visits). The final sample, therefore, consisted of 18 males and 21 females participating in the first focus group (henceforth known as Focus Group A), and 18 males and 21 females in the second focus group (henceforth known as Focus Group B). The implications of this will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 9, Section 9.3.1 (p. 416).

Participants were aged between 9 and 11 years.

### *3.4 Materials*

#### *3.4.1 Introduction Session*

During the introduction session, participants were recruited with the aid of a double-sided A4 Participant Information Letter produced with advice from a Key Stage 2 worker (see Appendix A, p. 474). Full details outlining the nature, aims and methods of the study were presented on one side together with details about participation, confidentiality, anonymity, the right to withdraw, and the intended outcomes of the research. A Consent Form was presented on the reverse (see Appendix B, p. 476).

This form consisted of seven questions to ascertain whether the children had understood the Participant Information Letter and whether they consented to participate (e.g., “Have you read the information letter?” and “Do you agree to take part in this research?”). Children were requested to respond to each item by circling either “yes” or “no”.

### 3.4.2 Focus Groups

In Focus Group A, one activity was carried out using worksheets adapted from *Towards a non-violent society: Checkpoints for young people* (Checkpoints; Varnava, 2002), one for each area of school life. These included (a) home/school/community (e.g., “I am involved in making the rules on behaviour”); (b) values (e.g., “Everyone is expected to show respect for oneself and others”); (c) organisation “I know whom to speak to if I am bullied, called names or hurt in any way”); (d) environment (e.g., “My school is a pleasant place and well looked after”); (e) curriculum (e.g., “I learn what causes violence and how I can avoid it”); and (f) training (e.g., “I explore violence and the consequences of violence through drama and role-play”) (see Appendix C, p. 478, for an example). Each worksheet consisted of five statements regarding the promotion of non-violence which children were required to respond to by ticking either “yes” or “no”. Participants transferred responses to a web-diagram to create a visual record of their responses (see Appendix D, p. 480). A second activity comprised a brainstorming and sorting exercise (adapted from Pretty, Guijt, Thompson, & Scoones, 1995) used to generate and cluster participants’ own ideas for each area of school life outlined above (see Section 3.5.5.1, p. 103, for full details).



In Focus Group B, to find out what children needed in participant information materials in terms of content and appearance, two activities were used, that is, the Evaluation Wheel (adapted from Pretty et al., 1995) and designing a leaflet. The Evaluation Wheel activity was selected for its capacity to enable individuals to evaluate different aspects of printed materials while the second activity provided participants with an opportunity to design their own front cover for a leaflet (see Section 3.5.5.2, p. 104, for full details). In the absence of existing participant information materials aimed specifically at children, the stimulus materials presented to the participants for evaluation were: (a) the A4 Participant Information Letter presented to the children at the introduction sessions (serif font, 12-point; business-style letter on Roehampton University letterhead) (Appendix A, p. 474); (b) a booklet (ChildLine, n.d., a) promoting the ChildLine helpline (sans serif font, approximately 10-point size; colour; cartoon illustrated throughout; text boxes) (see Appendix E, p. 482, for sample pages); and (c) *Checkpoints* (sans serif font, approximately 9-point size; black and blue print; cover photograph only) (see Appendix F, p. 484, for sample pages). Felt-tip pens, coloured crayons, coloured markers, worksheets, flipchart paper and coloured Post-it notes were made available for executing the structured research activities. In addition, in the leaflet design activity a variety of art materials were provided including coloured paper, coloured shapes and stickers (ticks, smiley faces, and “well done”), glue and scissors.

### 3.5 Procedure

#### 3.5.1 Access and Recruitment

In order to access potential participants, sixty-nine letters were mailed to all primary and secondary school head teachers in a south-west London LEA inviting them to



participate in the study (see Appendix G, p. 486). The letter outlined the aims, design, methods and outcomes of the programme of research and was accompanied by a School Information Leaflet (see Appendix H, p. 489), a document outlining how the proposed research would cover key areas in the Citizenship and PSHE KS2 and KS3 curriculum (see Appendices I, p. 492, and J, p. 495) and a copy of *Checkpoints*. Following telephone conversations with several prospective schools, Cedar School<sup>1</sup> agreed to participate in the Exploratory Study. An initial meeting was held in April 2003 with the school co-ordinator at which time the nature of the research and how best to implement the study were discussed in further detail. A schedule for conducting the introduction sessions and the focus groups over a three-week period in the summer term of 2003 was drafted. It was agreed that the introduction sessions and data collection would take place during lesson time rather than at playtime, lunchtime or during school assembly. In actuality, due to a need to work around regular curriculum commitments, and following negotiation with participants, some focus groups extended into participants' playtime and lunchtime. It was also agreed that the introduction sessions would take the form of Circle Time with an opportunity for the children to interview me about the study. The school co-ordinator agreed that she would help the children prepare a list of questions for them to ask me prior to the session.

### 3.5.2. *Informed Consent*

Consent to participate was sought at three levels, from the head teacher on behalf of the school and the teaching staff, from the parents/carers, and from the children themselves. I sought to adopt a principle of consent that required the active consent

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<sup>1</sup> All school and participant names have been changed throughout to ensure participant anonymity

of the child and the passive consent of the adult (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). After consent had been granted from the head teacher using the Roehampton University Research Participant Consent Form (see Appendix K, p. 499), the school sent a letter drafted by myself to parents/carers outlining the study and seeking their permission for their child to be approached to participate (see Appendix L, p. 501).

Parents/carers were requested to contact the school should they not wish their child to be approached; no parent/carer did so. Finally, children’s active consent was sought at the introduction session with the aid of the Participant Information Letter and the Consent Form, all employed in an effort to enhance the children’s understanding of the study and the notion of informed consent (David et al., 2001; Davis, 1998; Hill et al., 1996; Mahon et al., 1996; Masson, 2004; Morrow & Richards, 1996).

### *3.5.3 Confidentiality*

Adopting an approach advanced by Thomas and O’Kane (1998), I assured the children that nothing told to me during the course of the study would be repeated to others. In the event that any information given by a child raised concerns (e.g., that someone was at risk of harm) I decided that it would be my responsibility to support the child in telling a third party (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). In terms of reporting the findings, I also assured the children of their anonymity such that any information provided would not be individually identifiable as theirs. Participants were reminded of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity at the start of the focus groups.



### *3.5.4 Introduction Session*

Two whole-class introduction sessions of approximately one hour duration each were conducted during lesson time at the beginning of June 2003, one with Year 5/6 (Class 1) and one with Year 6 (Class 2). The sessions were conducted in the children's classroom with the furniture set out in typical classroom style; the Class 2 teacher informed me that she did not do Circle Time very often, as she was reluctant to rearrange the furniture. Each class teacher introduced me to their class and then remained present for the duration of the session. I stood at the front of the classroom and talked about my role as a researcher and the programme of research for about five minutes; I explained the dilemma of informing children about research without an information leaflet, stressing this was one of the tasks for which I needed their help. The Class 2 teacher positively reinforced the role that the children could play by being involved in the research. Two copies of the Participant Information Letter were distributed to each child, which I then read aloud to the whole class to reduce any effects of reading ability. Children were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research; Class 1 asked few questions; Class 2 asked numerous questions. Whether or not they wanted to participate, the children were invited to complete two Consent Forms, one to be returned to myself, and one to be retained for their own records, following explanation by myself of key terms. In Class 1, the class teacher intervened in the informed consent procedure such that she asked those children who had declined their informed consent to reconsider; as a result, eight children altered their decision to participate. The volunteer rates are reported in Chapter 4, Section 4.1, p. 115.



### 3.5.5 *Focus Groups*

While it is recommended that single-sex focus groups work best, since boys and girls are often hostile to each other and have marked differences in interests (Greenbaum, 1987, cited in Hill et al., 1996), on this occasion it was deemed appropriate to use mixed-gender focus groups as the children knew each other well (Hennessy & Heary, 2005). Furthermore, Greenbaum (1987, cited in Hill et al., 1996) advocates an optimum group size of five to six participants. Thus, mixed-sex focus groups were conducted with 5-6 participants each. Those children who had consented to participate during the introduction sessions but were absent on the day that the focus groups were conducted were offered an alternative date to participate. The class teachers allocated the participants to each focus group. Participants were collected from their classroom by myself and escorted to an unused classroom awaiting refurbishment where the focus groups were conducted during lesson time, each lasting approximately one hour.

The participants were seated on chairs placed in a small circle for all activities except the leaflet design activity, which was conducted around an oblong table. Each focus group began with instructions (see Appendix M, p. 503) to explain the general nature of the focus group, confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw.

Furthermore, I checked that participants wished to continue to take part in the research. The focus group started with a name game, the aims of which were to aid introductions, to help build rapport between myself and the participants, and to act as an “ice breaker” in Focus Group A and as a “warm up” in Focus Group B. Data were collected in the form of audio tape recordings of the focus group discussions,

individual worksheets, flipchart outputs and leaflet designs. All children agreed to the focus groups being tape-recorded.

#### *3.5.5.1 Focus group A.*

In the first activity, one area of school life (i.e., home/school/community, values, organisation, environment, curriculum or training) was allocated to each focus group and participants were asked to complete a school life worksheet individually. The first focus group was allocated home/school/community; the second focus group was allocated values, and so on. For the second activity, participants were asked to brainstorm their own list of statements for an area of school life using the prompt “What recommendations would you like to make to your teachers to make the school a happier, safer place with improved facilities with regard to [*insert home/school/community, values, organisation, environment, curriculum or training*]?” Participants were requested to individually write each single idea on a coloured Post-it note and place it on a flip chart. Discussion between participants about their individual ideas was encouraged to generate further ideas for adding to the flip chart. Following brainstorming, participants were asked to sort the Post-it notes into different themes (Pretty et al., 1995). Through discussion and negotiation, the focus group agreed upon how the ideas could be clustered and themed. Finally, after themes had been agreed, the Post-it notes were re-sorted under theme headings, which the children wrote upon the flip chart. Participants were offered a copy of *Checkpoints* to take away with them for future reference.



### 3.5.5.2 *Focus group B.*

Using the Evaluation Wheel research activity and *Checkpoints* and the ChildLine booklet as stimuli, participants were asked to think about what needed to be included in participant information leaflets for children to read and understand about being involved in research. These ideas were listed on a flip chart. The participants were asked to draw a wheel on the flip chart with the same number of spokes as criteria previously listed and asked to label each spoke with one criterion. The participants evaluated both leaflets according to their specified criteria and scored each criterion by marking the spoke at the appropriate point. The spokes represented a scale with low or zero at the centre of the wheel and high or 10 at the circumference. In the second activity participants were requested to design a cover for a participant information leaflet that would be attractive to children of a similar age using the materials provided. The theme of the design was entitled “Feeling Safe and Happy at School”. A selection of leaflets aimed at children was made available to give the participants some design ideas, including Cedar School’s own Behaviour Policy, which had been designed by school pupils.

Towards the end of the leaflet design activity, most of the participants expressed a desire to take their leaflets away with them. I negotiated with the children that I would keep the leaflet designs in order to make a record of them for myself, and return them the following day. For subsequent focus groups, I provided participants with blank A5 envelopes for the anonymous return of their leaflet designs; participants were asked to write their name on the front and put their leaflet design inside; in this way, I knew whose leaflet design was whose without participants having to write their name on the back.



At the end of the third Focus Group B, some of the participants awarded themselves with “well done” stickers provided as materials for the leaflet design activity.

Following this initiative, I purchased additional stickers for the remaining focus groups and encouraged participants to award themselves with stickers at the end of the session. Participants were offered a copy of the ChildLine booklet to take away with them for future reference.

### *3.5.6 Debriefing*

At the end of each focus group, participants were offered the opportunity to discuss their experience to ensure their understanding of the research. If they felt that participating in the research had disturbed them in any way, participants were also reminded about the additional support listed at the end of the participant information letter should they require to discuss their experiences with a third party. On completion of the study, participants each received a £2 gift token in recognition of their contribution (although the reward was not mentioned in negotiating their consent) together with a ChildLine (n.d., b) information sheet entitled *Bullying: Information for primary school pupils* and a thank-you note. The children were offered the opportunity to access feedback on the research findings from the school office at a later date.

## *3.6 Ethical Considerations*

In addition to the issues of informed consent and confidentiality presented in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2 (p. 71) and Section 2.3.3 (p. 79), respectively, approval to conduct this study was sought and granted from the Roehampton University Ethics Committee. Ethical standards were applied based upon the code of conduct of The

British Psychological Society (2000). Furthermore, I sought guidance from such documents as *Involving young people in research projects* (France, 2000), *Including children in social research* (Harker, 2002) and *Guidelines for research* (National Children's Bureau, 2003). From the school's perspective, ongoing care was maintained through regular liaison with the head teacher, school co-ordinator and class teachers involved. In return for access, the school received a short summary of the findings in the autumn of 2007. For both the protection of the children, and myself I obtained disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

### *3.7 Approach to Data Analysis*

#### *3.7.1 Transcription*

Leaflet designs were scanned and saved as JPEG files.

Raw data in the form of audio tape recordings and flipchart outputs from the focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim preserving the words spoken or written (Wilkinson, 2004). This method of transcription was selected as the data were hard to transcribe owing to the poor quality of the audio tape-recordings (e.g., overlapping talk, muffled talk, noise and banging), the positioning of the microphone in relation to the structured research activities and the minimal nature of the flipchart outputs. Despite establishing the ground rule at the outset that everyone should speak loudly and clearly and one at a time, when transcribing the audio tape recordings it was often difficult to distinguish between one voice and another (Millward, 2000).



### 3.7.2 *Analysis of the Focus Group Data*

Analysis of the raw data from the focus groups (audio transcripts, leaflet designs, flip chart outputs) was undertaken using content analysis. According to Cavanagh (1997), content analysis represents a flexible method for analyzing written texts and other forms of communication. Indeed, a review of the literature on content analysis reveals a broad differentiation between a quantitative approach and a qualitative one. On the one hand, Berelson (1952, p. 18) defined content analysis as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication”, on the other, Kracauer (1952, pp. 637-638) challenged this definition, arguing that the qualitative approach to content analysis:

achieves its breakdowns without special regard for frequencies. What counts alone in qualitative analysis – if the verb is permissible in a context which defies counting – is the selection and rational organization of such categories as condense the substantive meanings of the given text, with a view to testing pertinent assumptions and hypotheses.

Traditionally associated with the analysis of media communications, quantitative content analysis was used primarily to analyze the objective content of documents, producing counts of words or phrases about predefined and usually precoded categories that could be statistically quantified (Altheide, 1996; Cavanagh, 1997). However, critics of quantitative content analysis considered it an inadequate method suggesting that it decontextualized aspects of communication thereby reducing its accuracy (Kracauer, 1952). Thus, while qualitative content analysis is also oriented toward documenting and understanding the communication of meaning, it recognizes



that “products of social interaction...can also be studied reflexively, looking at one feature in the context of what is understood about other features” (Altheide, 1996, p. 14). Using this approach the emphasis is on revising themes and categories, and moving back and forth between conceptualization, data collection, coding and analysis:

The aim is to be systematic and analytic but not rigid. Categories and variables initially guide the study, but others are allowed and expected to emerge throughout the study, including an orientation toward *constant discovery* and *constant comparison* of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances. (Altheide, 1996, p. 16; italics in original)

Weber (1990, p. 69) suggested that “there is no single right way to do content analysis”, rather the specific type of content analysis approach a researcher chooses will depend on what methods are judged appropriate for the topic under investigation.

While content analysis has been used across a range of disciplines typically to analyze written communications (Anderson, 1997), it has evolved to analyze data other than written documents such as cartoons, drawings, illustrations, photographs and pictures (Anderson, 1997; Cavanagh, 1997; Robson, 2002). Generally, data are classified into fewer content categories, each of which may consist of one, several or many words, presumed to have similar meanings, and achieved through a variety of methods and techniques (Weber, 1990). These include identifying the universe to be studied, that is deciding on the selection of material to be studied; defining the

categories, or coding scheme, into which the universe of analysis will be allocated; and determining the units for analysis, for example, words, themes (sentences, phrases), characters, items or space-time measures (Anderson, 1997; Millward, 2004; Wilkinson, 2003).

Given that the content for analysis in the present study was children's leaflet designs, I adopted a quantitative approach to content analysis since it lent itself to the study of non-textual documents. In the present study, the leaflet designs constituted the content for analysis. A content-derived coding scheme was developed based upon a preliminary examination of each leaflet design together with the list of criteria for evaluating a leaflet generated by the participants in the Evaluation Wheel activity (e.g., colour, font size, text boxes). For analysis of the leaflet designs, the occurrence of each design element was taken as the unit of analysis and systematically assigned to each category. The categories were exhaustive, that is, all occurrences could be assigned to a category and exclusive that is, all instances could be assigned to one category only.

Assessment of the inter-rater reliability of the coding was computed using Cohen's Kappa coefficient of concordance. A PhD student with no other involvement in the research programme independently coded fourteen leaflet designs. Excellent inter-rater reliability was achieved with a Kappa coefficient of .94.

While a quantitative approach was deemed appropriate for the content analysis of the children's leaflet designs, it has been suggested that such an approach neglects the



qualitative intricacies of data analysis, rendering it inadequate for the exploration of more involved communications (Kracauer, 1952). In contrast to the emphasis on quantification, Kracauer (1952, p. 639) advocated a qualitative approach to content analysis that “penetrates textual dimensions which are completely inaccessible to quantitative techniques”. Therefore, since the emphasis of the analysis of the focus group transcripts was on meaning rather than quantification, I adopted an approach to qualitative content analysis as described by Millward (2000) and Woods, Priest and Roberts (2002). According to Kracauer (1952), in contrast to quantitative content analysis, a qualitative approach emphasizes the exploration of the whole of the content in the search for emergent categories, which presents the researcher with the opportunity to identify categories that might otherwise have remained unobserved. Furthermore, Berg (2004, p.269) argues that from this perspective a qualitative approach to content analysis “provides a method for obtaining good access to the words of the [participants’]...transcribed accounts...” which, in turn, offers the researcher the opportunity to learn about children’s perspectives and how they view their social worlds. A perspective that supports the notion that in the exploration of children’s understanding of bullying in primary school, their voices can be listened to and heard.

Broadly speaking, the basic coding process in a qualitative content analysis involves the organization of large quantities of text into fewer content categories, which represent themes directly expressed in the text or derived from the text through analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Researchers using content analysis create or develop a coding scheme to organize data into categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).



Thus, in the present study, a coding system was derived from the research aims with additional conceptual codes arising from a closer examination of each transcript (Millward, 2000). The first step of the analysis involved reading the transcripts line-by-line, highlighting sections of text of varying size, for example, sentences, phrases, whole exchanges, to create master codes, from which further categories would emerge. Following this, second- and third-level coding was carried out to ascertain core themes within each main category. If several pieces of text, either from within one transcript or several transcripts, pertained to the same concept, they were copied and pasted under the appropriate theme. If several participants used similar words, manifest content analysis (i.e., participants' actual words form concepts) was possible; otherwise, interpretation of meaning was achieved through latent content analysis (i.e., concepts were derived from the interpretation and judgment of participants' responses) (Priest, Roberts, & Woods, 2002). Tables were developed in Word, which tabulated master codes, categories and themes for each focus group and that provided a descriptive overview of the data from which quotations could be located to illustrate particular themes across the transcripts (Millward, 2000). The process of data analysis became one of cycling backwards and forwards between the Word tables and the raw data in order to continually check and question emergent themes. Specifically, a reverse process ensued which involved scrutinizing the transcripts in order to obtain supportive evidence and identify direct quotations from the transcripts that would substantiate the emergent themes (Priest et al., 2002). Previously coded data was revisited periodically to check the stability of the coding over time (Cavanagh, 1997; Roberts, 1999).

Robson (2002) assumes that a substantial amount of qualitative data means that some kind of specialist software is required for the purpose. Indeed, Stroh (2000) suggests that specialist computer software packages offer the obvious means of handling and managing large amounts of qualitative data. Furthermore, it has been argued that many researchers have embraced such technology in an attempt to ensure methodological rigour and robustness in their analysis (Blismas & Dainty, 2003). However, Mauthner and Doucet (1998, p. 122) suggest that “the use of technology...not to deny the obvious practical benefits...confers an air of scientific objectivity onto what remains a fundamentally subjective, interpretive process”. Furthermore, it has been argued that the widespread influence of specialist computer software packages has resulted in a homogenized mode of data analysis (Coffey, Holbrook, & Atkinson, 1996), such that researchers are constrained by analytic strategies that run counter to their methodological and theoretical orientations (Kelle, 1997). Indeed, I felt that the application of a specialist computer software package would compromise my view of children in research outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.2 (p. 62) in terms of distancing me from their voices since my focus of attention would be on the software rather than on the data (Kelle, 1997; Stroh, 2000). Besides, Stanley and Temple (1995, cited in Bryman, 2001) have suggested that most of the coding and retrieval features that a researcher is likely to need in the course of conducting a qualitative data analysis are available in Word for Windows.

Thus, I rejected the use of specialist software in favour of manually organizing the data using the ‘cut’ and ‘paste’ functions in Word; transcripts were cut and sorted manually into tabulated form. Codes were placed in the left-hand columns, with illustrative quotations for each on the right; coded segments included phrases or



sentences. The codes were applied systematically across all the transcripts; all recurrences of a given code were noted. Although the coding procedure followed a logical progression the process was not linear, rather it required a moving back and forth between the transcripts and the process of clustering meaningful statements, through revising categories and themes, as familiarity with the data was achieved (Millward, 2000). In working with transcripts of focus groups with children it should be noted, as other researchers have done, that their contributions are typically short, thereby making the process of identifying units considerably simpler (Hennessy & Heary, 2005) which, in turn, made it easier to select quotations representative of the categories (Wilkinson, 2003).

With regard to reliability checking of the coded data, Emond (2005) has stressed the importance of accepting the impact of the researcher on shaping the interpretation of the data. On the other hand, Robson (2002) suggests that the main reason for assessing inter-observer agreement is to defend against the idiosyncrasies of a single coder. In contrast, it has been argued that employing a second coder creates a distance between the coder and the participant due to a lack of contact at the data collection stage (Knodel, 1993). Furthermore, Morse (1994) does not recommend the quantitative model of ensuring reliability and validity by employing a second coder stating that:

This process actually violates the process of induction, because the first investigator has a bank of knowledge from conducting other interviews and from observing that the second rater does not have. As the process of inductive qualitative inquiry frequently depends on insight and on the process



of linking data (both among categories and with established theory), expecting another investigator to have the same insight from a limited data source is unrealistic. (p. 231)

Given the qualitative nature of this study, and my approach to data analysis outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.5 (p. 88), I subscribed to the latter view in the belief that this would reduce the power imbalance between researcher and participant.

However, it has been argued that in emphasizing the subjective over the objective (McKernie, 2002), “there is no way to establish the validity or truth value of scientific claims or observations in qualitative work” (Merrick, 1999, p. 25). To address concerns commonly levelled at qualitative research, such as ‘validity’, ‘reliability’ and ‘generalizability’, concepts posed within a numerical rather than a process framework according to Edwards and Ribbens (1998), I adopted a reflexive approach to the research process. Throughout the programme of research, I maintained a research journal in which I documented the decisions and choices that I made regarding research activities and data analysis choices, in order that the process of research might be traced.

## CHAPTER 4

### Exploratory Study Results and Discussion

#### *4.1 Volunteer Rates*

In response to the Consent Form, the majority of children said that they had read the A4 Participant Information Letter, that they were happy with the answers to all their questions and that they had had the chance to ask questions. Nearly all children said that they understood about the right to withdraw and the issue of confidentiality. Of 52 children, 89% agreed to take part in the research. Table 4.1 presents an overview of the responses.

#### *4.2 Leaflet Designs*

Content analysis generated frequencies of the occurrence of design elements in each leaflet, although it should be noted that the materials that I provided for the activity necessarily influenced the designs. A preliminary examination of the 43 leaflet designs (some participants did more than one design), together with the list of criteria for evaluating a leaflet generated by the participants in the Evaluation Wheel exercise (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5.5.2, p. 104), were used to devise a content-derived coding scheme.

Coding categories included the following design elements: (a) background colour of leaflet, either pastel or bright shade; (b) the size of the leaflet; (c) a title; (d) the presence of coloured writing (e) text boxes; (f) a cut-away pattern, either around the edge or in the middle; (g) an illustration either drawn by hand or created from

sticky paper pieces; (h) a pattern anywhere except around the border; (i) stickers (smiley/well done/tick); (j) stars; (k) a dialogue bubble; (l) a border design; (m) a logo/symbol; and (n) cut-out figures from the stimulus materials. The output of the content analysis is presented in Figure 4.1 in the form of frequencies of the occurrence of each design element.

Table 4.1  
*Percentage of Responses to the Consent Form (n = 52)*

	Yes	No
Have you read the Information Letter?	86.3	13.7
Have you had the chance to ask any questions?	70.6	29.4
Are you happy with the answers to all your questions?	83.3	16.7
Have you had enough information about the research?	84.6	15.4
Do you understand that taking part in the research is up to you and that you are free to back out at any time without having to give a reason?	96.2	3.8
Do you understand that anything you say will be confidential and that it will not be possible for anyone else to know what you have said?	94.2	5.8
Do you agree to take part in this research?	88.5	11.5



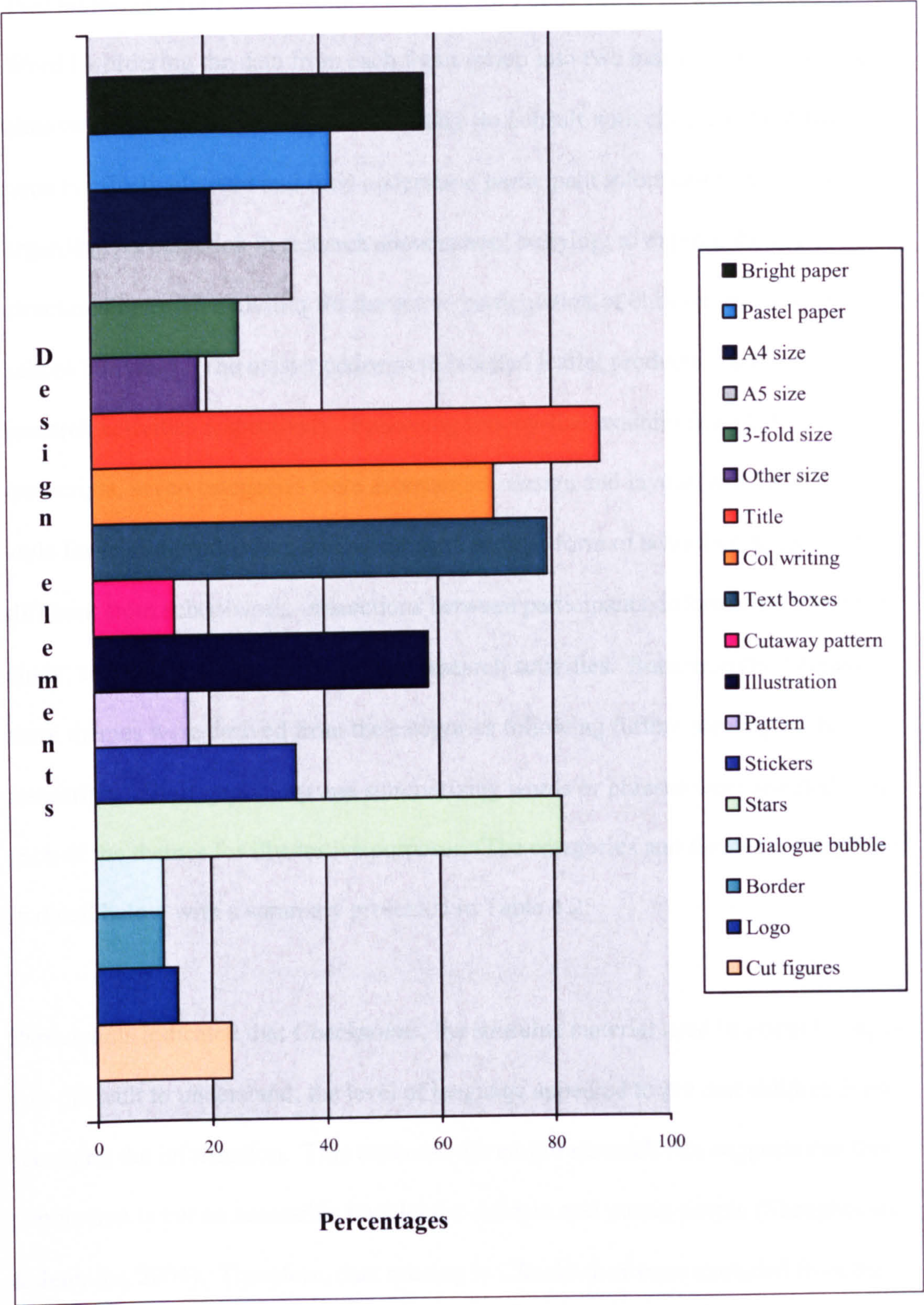


Figure 4.1. Frequencies of the Occurrence of Each Leaflet Design Element



### 4.3 Focus Group Discussions

Two tables, one for Focus Group A and one for Focus Group B, were created in Word by ordering the data from each focus group into two master codes, based on aims two and three of the exploratory study (to consult with children about what they need to effectively read and fully understand participant information materials regarding participation in research about school bullying; to explore the use of structured research activities for the active participation of children in the study of school bullying). The master codes were labelled leaflet production and structured research activities respectively. Following line-by-line examination of the transcripts, seven categories were ascertained: design and layout, and language and style for leaflet production, and research as another form of schoolwork, research as different from schoolwork, interactions between participants, information about the study, and ethical issues for structured research activities. Subsequently, twenty-three themes were derived from the categories following further scrutiny of the transcripts. Short quotations and summarizing words or phrases were selected from each of the themes for illustrative purposes. The categories and themes are explained in detail below with a summary presented in Table 4.2.

Participants indicated that *Checkpoints*, the stimulus material used in Focus Group A was difficult to understand; the level of language appeared to prevent children from accessing the information. This concurs with earlier research that suggests that this publication is not an accessible booklet for children and young people (Shaughnessy & Jennifer, 2004). Therefore, data relating to *Checkpoints* were excluded from the analysis and the publication was removed from the programme of research. (Since the present study was conducted *Checkpoints for young people* has been revised).

Table 4.2

*Summary of Categories and Themes*

Master codes	Categories	Themes
Leaflet production	Design and layout	Initial appeal
		Font type and font size
		Visual stimuli
	Language and style	Colour
		Vocabulary
		Content
Structured Research Activities	Research as schoolwork	Seeking guidance & reassurance
		Comparison of data
		Seeking permission
		Accuracy of execution
		Ownership of data
	Research as different from schoolwork	Copying
		Time off from lessons
		Provision of materials
	Interactions among participants	Harmonious interactions
		Discordant interactions
	<i>(table continues)</i>	



Table 4.2 (continued)

Master codes	Categories	Themes
	Information about the study	The school's participation
		The wider scope of the study
		How the data will be used
	Ethical issues	Right to withdraw
		Confidentiality
		Use of consent form

4.3.1 Leaflet Production: Design and Layout

The first category to be identified was the presentation of leaflets and information materials aimed at children in terms of the design and layout. This category included four themes: initial appeal, font type and font size, visual stimuli and use of colour.

4.3.1.1 Initial appeal.

Overall, analysis of the data suggested that participants perceived the ChildLine booklet to be more appropriate for their age group (i.e., 9- to 11-year olds), as they perceived it to be more fun and exciting than *Checkpoints*. In terms of initial appeal, the *Checkpoints* received criticism for being too formal: “it should look more for children”, for being unexciting: “it’s dull”, “...and it’s boring”, and for being

unattractive: “too ugly”. For example, one participant said it needed “more pictures, big titles, more fun; it’s got to *do* something”. Specifically, the focus group data suggested that the black and white front cover photograph of the non-violence booklet, portraying a group of secondary school-aged children would not encourage potential readers to open it, “the cover’s a bit formal, too boring”. One participant said of *Checkpoints*: “it looks like a boring leaflet that you would find in a hospital or in a doctor’s”. Another said, “if they don’t like the front of it they ain’t going to open it”. Above all, participants considered *Checkpoints* unsuitable for a Year 5/6 audience: “it should look more for children...the book should be more for children not for teenagers”.

#### 4.3.1.2 *Font type and font size.*

The font used for *Checkpoints* was considered “boring” by participants due to its size, “look how boring it looks, like tiny black writing” as was the A4 Participant Information Letter, “boring, too small”. While participants preferred the size of the font used in the ChildLine booklet, they considered it unattractive, “it’s big, but it’s too plain”. However, they liked its colour, “not only is it quite big for a little leaflet but it’s got colour this writing”. Participants would have preferred to see a larger, fancier font and suggested “we kinda like big writing” and something “bigger, a bit more funky”. One participant suggested that “the writing could be in a more fancie [sic] way” and another would like to have seen a font that was “like bold and more childish”. In addition, some participants needed help with reading the content of *Checkpoints*, as the font size was too small for them to read alone. In addition, participants judged the response tick boxes to be too small saying they wanted “bigger boxes”.

#### 4.3.1.3 *Visual stimuli.*

The analysis revealed the method of communicating information to children was an important element. Although one participant said of *Checkpoints* “I think the book is set out quite good”, another criticized it for being tedious saying, “That’s boring, that’s boring”. The ChildLine booklet, on the other hand, was praised because “it’s got all different points and boxes”. Participants specifically suggested puzzles, competitions, quizzes, mazes, word searches, and graphs as alternative modes of imparting information. Specifically, one participant suggested “they should have comments from other children” and another suggested “maybe a character that says something”. In addition, participants considered the photographic image employed on the front cover of *Checkpoints* to be inappropriate in terms of the age of the children portrayed, “we don’t need a teenager [we need] a seven year old...it should be pictures of children”, and unrealistic in terms of “fake poses”. The participants preferred the cartoon-style images adopted in the ChildLine booklet, for example, “it’s got pictures is what’s important” and “on this one it has cartoon characters”. In addition, one suggestion was to include drawings by children “like maybe nursery children, like they do drawings”.

In addition, several participants made recommendations for the structure of the response columns, suggesting the addition of a “sometimes” column in addition to the “yes” and “no” columns, to aid effective completion of each checkpoint. One participant also suggested, “you could have a happy and a sad face to shade in instead of boxes”.



#### 4.3.1.4 *Colour.*

Participants criticized *Checkpoints* for its lack of colour: “all’s it is is blue and black”. On the other hand, the ChildLine booklet was praised for having colour, which for one participant equated to “excitement”. The children identified two elements of *Checkpoints* that could benefit from bright colours, that is, the colour of the page itself and the font, “because we like lots of colour”. For example, one participant said, “the page needs more colour”. Another said “colourful writing, not black”. In addition, participants suggested that the text could be in a variety of different colours, and that if text boxes were included that they also could be in different colours.

#### 4.3.2 *Leaflet Production: Language and Style*

The second category identified by the analysis focused on the participant’s ease of reading and comprehension of the content of the stimulus materials. Participants indicated that the A4 Participant Information Letter and *Checkpoints* were difficult to understand in terms of the type of language used and in terms of the information that was included, especially the way in which the information was imparted.

Participants suggested that the ChildLine booklet was easier to understand than the *Checkpoints* booklet, which they considered to be aimed at an older audience. The analysis identified two themes: vocabulary and content.

##### 4.3.2.1 *Vocabulary.*

Participants considered the language used in *Checkpoints* to be “way too serious” and “too formal”. They would have liked to have seen more slang, for example, they considered the word pupil to be “too serious” and said, “I’d rather be called a kid”.

Specifically, participants found statements difficult to understand in terms of the complexity of language and terminology employed. One exchange between two participants and I illustrated this point:

P1: Hey, what's this about, overcrowding on school premises is avoided?

The questions in the book should be easier to understand, easier to understand.

DJ: Easier to understand? Can you give me an example of...?

P1: This one, look...um...overcrowding on school premises is avoided...

P2: Yeah, it means like loads of people on the school premises...

DJ: Are there places in school that get too crowded?

P1: Yes, when fights and things [break out]

P2: And at home time

Other specific terms that participants did not understand included the “Code of Conduct” and “the home/school contract” which had to be explained by myself during the course of the activity in order for them to complete the worksheet.

One participant queried the checkpoint which states “There are comfortable places indoors and outside for me and friends”, and wondered “does that mean teaching in the school or outside?” adding that you “shouldn’t put adult vocabulary”.

#### *4.3.2.2 Content.*

When asked what information needed to be included in an information leaflet about research, participants said that there was too much information contained

within the A4 Participant Information Letter (see Appendix A, p. 474) and concluded, “Yeah, and you can’t read it”. Participants wanted to know the “What? Who? When? Where? Cost? Why?” about research. Specifically they wanted to know “What’s going to happen”, “Who’s working there?”, “How many kids would be [taking part]?”, “What we going to be doing?” and the “Right to join in”. Participants also wanted to know whether there was going to be any refreshments and whether there was going to be a reward (e.g., “free sweets”). In addition, participants said, “they need to know if someone can help you”. In particular, they wanted referral options for after the study including “More phone numbers” and “More websites”. They also wanted “Advice about how to prevent bullying”.

#### *4.3.3 Structured Research Activities: Research as Schoolwork*

The first category identified focuses upon the participants’ framing of the structured research activities as another form of schoolwork. Five themes were identified: seeking guidance and reassurance, comparison of data, seeking permission, accuracy of execution and ownership of data. These five themes are elaborated upon below.

##### *4.3.3.1 Seeking guidance and reassurance.*

The participants’ continual need for clarification, guidance and reassurance epitomized the construction of the structured research activities as a form of schoolwork. For example, irrespective of the open-ended instructions for implementing the leaflet design, and despite reassuring the participants that there was no right or wrong way in which to execute the task, many participants



nevertheless carried it out according to a structured agenda. They sought clarification of the instructions at the beginning of all activities, for example, asking, “Do we write on the sticky pads?” (for sorting exercise), “Do you circle it?” (for the *Checkpoint* worksheet), “Do we colour that one?” (for the web diagram), “Can we do as many as we like?” (for the brainstorming suggestions), and “Shall I do something on the back?” (for the leaflet design). During the execution of the activities, participants sought specific clarification. For example, regarding the design of their leaflet one participant asked, “What if you aren’t good at drawing people but we [sic] want to draw like a cartoony person?” and another asked, “Miss, could you have the hand punching and the hand shaking [for a logo] and then do one that’s...they’re both shaking?”.

Participants also constantly required my reassurance throughout the activities (e.g., “Is mine OK?”, “Miss, is that alright?”, “Do you like it, Dawn?”, “Look at my one”). Some participants continually reassured themselves with a commentary on their progress:

P: I’m doing the inside, I’m doing the inside now

DJ: Do you want to do something inside?

P: I’m doing something inside

Many participants seeking help with their spelling (e.g., “How do you spell bullying?”, “How do you spell thousands?”) voiced the ultimate need for reassurance. Some participants also sought reassurance regarding whether they had executed the task correctly in terms of expressing a need to see the leaflets

designed by participants from previous groups (e.g., “Can you show us some of the others?”).

#### *4.3.3.2 Comparison of contributions.*

In spite of some participants having difficulty motivating themselves with the task (e.g., “I don’t know what to do”, “I don’t know what to write”, “Miss, what shall I write here?”), most participants quickly took control of, and responsibility for, structuring their leaflet design. However, they would continually keep an eye on how other participants in the group executed the task. They achieved this through a process of comparing their design with that of their peers and remarking on the similarities and differences observed between them (e.g., “Mine’s too starry”, “Mine looks plain compared to his”, “Look, look, is that alright, it looks too plain, it’s too plain”). After comparing their design with that of their neighbours, others perceived either that they had incorrectly executed the activity (for example, “I’ve done it wrong”) or that they had not contributed enough. For example, during the brainstorming activity participants became competitive about the number of suggestions that they produced (e.g., “I’ve only done one”).

#### *4.3.3.3 Seeking permission.*

Participants sought my permission for a variety of reasons. For example, in the worksheet activity, the chairs were arranged in a circle and I had not provided clipboards on which the participants could lean to complete the worksheets. This resulted in requests to lean on the floor or table, for example, “Do you mind if we do it on the floor?” and “Can I move around here?” On other occasions,

during the leaflet design activity, participants were keen to cut up and make use of the stimulus materials provided for the leaflet design activity for their own designs (e.g., “Miss, can I rip this up?”), another outcome for which I had not planned. Permission was also sought when participants wanted to leave the room, either temporarily (e.g., “Can I wash my hands”) or permanently as in the case of the girl who wanted to be moved to another group:

P1: I wanna be in that group.

DJ: You’ll only be in one group this week ‘cos everyone else is back  
[from secondary school visits] now

P1: Oh

DJ: Yeah

P1: Can’t I be in that group instead of that one?

DJ: No, now you’re here I think it’s best if you stay in this group ‘cos I think these groups are going to get full ‘cos everyone’s back now, aren’t they?

P1: Can’t you swap me with someone?

LATER

P: Oh please, I’m sure Miss Roberts [class teacher] won’t mind

DJ: Well, the trouble is that there might be too many in the other group...well, go and check with her then

This permission seeking dialogue suggests that my status as a researcher was perceived by the participants as comparable to that of a teacher in terms of adult as authority figure. This notion was further illustrated by the numerous



occasions on which the participants addressed me as “Miss”, despite my continual requests to them to adopt my Christian name.

#### *4.3.3.4 Accuracy of execution.*

Some children were less concerned with whether they were doing it right and more concerned with the final product, for example, in terms of the accuracy with which they could execute their leaflet design. For example, despite providing a wide variety of materials with which to carry out the task, the brand new lead pencils required sharpening. Instead of making do with a biro or a coloured pencil, two girls were prepared to leave the activity to retrieve a sharpener from their classroom:

P: Do you have any normal pencils?

DJ: I have but I haven't got a sharpener...do you have a sharpener by any chance because I've got pencils but no... I forgot to bring a sharpener

P: There's one in our class

Some children requested rubbers to erase incorrect designs, which although I had not supplied were fortunately on the end of the pencils. To correct their designs, other participants used methods that were more elaborate. For example, one girl asked “Have you got any spare papers so I can [stick it over the top]...just blue, yes...I'm just testing which one [matches most closely]”. This attention to detail suggests that the participants were seriously engaged with the activity.

#### 4.3.3.5 *Ownership of data.*

The question often asked by participants towards the end of the activities, for example, “Do you need our names?” or “Can I put my name on mine?”, further illustrates the framing of the task as a form of schoolwork. This notion of ownership was further highlighted by the request from most participants to take their designs away with them (e.g., “I want to keep mine”, “Are you keeping these drawings that we did?”); an eventuality that had not occurred to me and for which I had not originally planned!

#### 4.3.4 *Structured Research Activities: Research as Different from Schoolwork*

The second category identified was the framing of the structured research activities as different from schoolwork. Three themes were identified: copying, time off from lessons, and the provision of materials. These three themes are elaborated upon below:

##### 4.3.4.1 *Copying.*

Several children chose to copy each other which in some cases did not prove a problem and resulted in some common themes in leaflet designs within the groups, but in others provoked heated responses from the participant whose design was being copied (e.g., “She’s copying”, “Don’t copy me”). During the brainstorming exercises especially, and despite my reassurances that copying did not matter, several participants were very upset that their peers were copying their suggestions.

#### *4.3.4.2 Time off from lessons.*

The framing of structured research activities as different from schoolwork is most clearly evidenced by participants' interest in the timing of the sessions. For example, some participants were interested in the duration of the session because it meant that they were missing lessons (e.g., "Can we stay 'til half past? Maths is ending", "Are we here 'til lunchtime?"). Others did not want the session to end (e.g., "I want to stay here", "Can we finish these off on Thursday?").

Although I had agreed with the school facilitator to schedule the focus groups during lesson times, there was an element of over-running on the days that I conducted the focus groups, and, following negotiation, most participants were happy to participate during their free time, that is, playtime or lunchtime.

#### *4.3.4.3 Provision of materials.*

Participants were very inquisitive about where certain items provided for the execution of the leaflet designs had been obtained from (e.g., "Where did you get these [crayons] from?") and how much materials and recording equipment had cost (e.g., "Miss, how much does this piece of equipment cost?"). One exchange related to the pens that I had provided:

P1: Where do you get these pens from?

DJ: I got them from my university

P1: Can I have one?

DJ: Well, I need it for the next group

P1: Oh, can you get me one please?

P2: And me



DJ: Don't you have things like this at school?

P1: We have to use pencils

DJ: Do you? You're not allowed to use biros?

P1: No

P2: Sometimes

P1: Only when Miss hands them out

This particular exchange related to dialogue that occurred in a subsequent group during which participants disclosed that peers from a previous group had retained biros provided for the purpose of the activity:

P1: Miss, people keep taking some of the pens. The blue pens

P2: Yeah, they took these ones

DJ: Oh, did they?

P1: Yeah

P2: Yeah, they took the pens

DJ: They weren't supposed to 'cos otherwise I won't have any left

P1: They had three of them

P2: Karen, Kim and Lucy

DJ: OK

#### *4.3.5 Structured Research Activities: Interactions among Research Participants*

The analysis revealed two themes related to the broad category of interactions among research participants: harmonious interactions and discordant interactions.

#### 4.3.5.1 *Harmonious interactions.*

While participants happily chatted with one another (e.g., about what television programmes they had viewed the night before, their exam results, the secondary schools they were going to, their parents) the structured research activities appeared to facilitate co-operative behaviour among participants, the opportunity for participants to collaborate in data collection and the opportunity for self-disclosure. For example, one participant requested help with his leaflet design and was inundated with offers from other participants:

P1: “Can you [Dawn Jennifer] draw me a thunderbolt?”

DJ: What you mean like a thing of lightening?

P1: Yeah

P2: I’ll do it for you

P3: I’ll do it

P4: Can I do it?

P1: Yeah

DJ: Yeah, like the lightening streak

P1: Big

The structured research activities also provided an opportunity for participants to take an active role in data collection. For example, during the Evaluation Wheel activity, one boy took over the responsibility for collecting scores for the evaluation process (“Put your hands up if you say ten...put your hand up for ten...everyone said ten”). On another occasion during a brainstorming exercise, one participant announced, “OK, we can stop now”.

In another group, the composition of participants, combined with the leaflet design activity, facilitated the disclosure of an episode of bullying that had occurred several years previously:

P: Miss, Mr Green's a bully he pulls your ears like this he picks you up by the ears

P: That's it man he put me out the window he got my legs and... hanging out the window when I was little

P: And Malcolm he got him by the ears

P: And he puts you in the bins

P: He's only playing...

DJ: But some people don't like that kind of playing do they?

P. No

P: It hurts you man, your ears are...

P: He hung a boy by the ears and then pulled him back in again

DJ: That's quite dangerous

P4: He puts children in the bins

P: He did that when I was seven

P: He pushed me...

#### *4.3.5.2 Discordant interactions.*

With the exception of one group, who remained very quiet throughout the leaflet design activity, all focus groups were characterized by teasing, joking and the kind of acting out that goes on among schoolchildren. However, during any



activity, and on several occasions, the presence of the recording equipment evoked boisterous behaviour including participants moving or fiddling with the tape recorder and the microphone, all participants talking at once, and participants talking loudly into the microphone or making silly noises.

Occasionally I had to intervene (e.g., “I’m going to put this [tape recorder] back in the middle ‘cos we’re going to need it in the middle in a minute” and “Let’s just put it [tape recorder] over here because otherwise it’ll interfere with the quality”). These sorts of interactions made groups seem unmanageable at times (and when attempting to transcribe the audiotape) and were challenging to my role as researcher. Nevertheless, on one occasion, when participants started to fool around with the microphone the interaction developed into a pretend interview, highlighting their potential as active researchers:

P: That’s what we’re gonna do to stop the bullying we’re gonna try and think of more ideas

P: And other ideas that we could have...interviews round the school.

Also, we can have some famous people or anyone coming in and talking to people about bullying

P: Jenny, how’s the weather?

P: The weather’s fine at the minute. I just want to say thank you to Dawn Jennifer because she is so thoughtful and we really do really really do really really do thank her because...

P: ...we missed maths...

P: and it’s just so so so such a lovely day...

A further difficulty, which I had not anticipated, was conflict over whose turn it was to use the scissors provided for the leaflet design activity (e.g., “I was just going to cut out some eyes when he took the scissors”). I had initially purchased three pairs to be shared amongst a maximum of six participants, however, I soon realized that I should have provided enough scissors for each participant; an oversight that I rectified at the earliest opportunity, that is, after the first two groups.

On another occasion verbal bullying, in the form of name-calling, surfaced between two participants:

P1: Miss, can you tell her to stop winding me up please?

P2: I’m not winding you up

P1: Yes you are

P2: You’re winding me up

P1: You’re saying I’m dumb

P2: You started it

#### *4.3.6 Structured Research Activities: Information about the Study*

Towards the end of each group discussion, participants felt comfortable enough to ask for further information about the study, including information about their school’s participation; about the wider scope of the study; and information about how the data, particularly their leaflet designs, would be used in the future.

#### *4.3.6.1 The school's participation.*

Dialogue about the study within the school revolved around questions regarding methodology. Participants were interested in the length of the study (e.g., “how long have you got left in this school?”) and the length of the sessions (e.g., “How long is each session?”, “How much time do we get next week?”). They were also interested in the sample in terms of the participating school (e.g., “Miss, why was your first school Cedar School?”, “Why did you choose Cedar School?”) and in terms of the individual participants (e.g., “Are you doing this with the other class?”, “Are you just doing it with Year 6?”). They also wanted to know the content of the focus groups (e.g., “What will we be doing next week?”; “Can we do all different things every week?”).

#### *4.3.6.2 The wider scope of the study.*

Beyond the participation of Cedar School, dialogue about the study centred on the involvement of other schools (e.g., “Which school are you going to after this?”, “And you’re going to different schools?”). They were also interested in the role of the researcher (e.g., “Are you the only one that’s going to work here...or do you have any helpers?”, “Who’s running it, like who’s sort of arranging...?”).

#### *4.3.6.3 How the data will be used.*

Dialogue about the leaflets that I would produce as a result of the research at Cedar School focused upon how the participants’ designs would be used (e.g., “Is [sic] there any ideas you can get from it [design]?”, “Is that [my leaflet] going to be in black and white?”). Participants were also interested in the availability



of the leaflets (e.g., “Where will it be?”, “Will you send it to us?”, “Are you going to hand them out?”).

#### *4.3.7 Structured Research Activities: Ethical Issues*

The analysis revealed three themes related to the issue of ethics: the right to withdraw, confidentiality and the use of the consent form.

##### *4.3.7.1 Right to withdraw.*

In one group, the majority of participants did not want to engage with the sorting exercise. After several prompts from me, they declined to participate further and after the following exchange, I brought the focus group to a close:

DJ: Does anyone want to help? Do you all agree?... How are you doing with the groups, do you want to give them some names?

P: No

DJ: You don't have to if you don't want to

P: No thanks

On two separate occasions during the leaflet design activity, two individual participants appeared to be ambiguous about taking part in the task. On one occasion, one participant declared, “I’m going to go singing. I want to go singing”. On another, after some encouragement to participate on my part, the participant decided to leave:

P1: I don't know what to do

DJ: You don't know what to do. Ok you're not inspired. Would it help to look at some of these? You don't have to do it if you don't want to do it. It's up to you. Do you want to think about, maybe, what goes inside? Do you want to go back to class? Ok, that's fine. You know you can stop if you don't want to do this you can go whenever you like....Um, Katie if you want, you can go back to class, that's absolutely fine.

P1: OK

DJ: It's up to you. But thank you very much.

DJ: See you later. Bye. Thank you

Later, the remaining participants took up the discussion:

P1: Where's Katie gone?

P2: Gone

P3: She was in the classroom

DJ: She wanted to stop so she's gone. That's fine, do you remember I said if you wanted to stop at any time you could?

P4: You mean she's quit from it? She's stopped doing it just for this time or forever?

DJ: Well, this is the last session with your group so yes she's stopped forever I guess

#### *4.3.7.2 Confidentiality.*

While all participants agreed at the beginning of each focus group to audiotape recordings of the sessions, several participants queried the presence of the recording equipment during the course of the session (e.g., "What's this for?",

“What’s this tape for?”). Another participant queried why the discussion was being recorded (e.g., “Why are we being recorded?”), and yet another reminded other members of her group of the presence of the recording equipment (e.g., “Oh, you know you’re on tape?”).

#### *4.3.7.3 Use of consent forms.*

Referring to the thank you at the end of the Consent Form, “Thank you for taking part in this research”, one participant said, “You shouldn’t have that...you should say thank you for your time”. Further discussion indicated that what he meant was that at the point of asking a child for their informed consent, I could not thank them for taking part in the research as they had not yet taken part.

### *4.4 Discussion*

The results of this study offer insights into a number of key issues regarding the provision of research information to potential child participants and the active involvement of children in the research process. Specifically, the findings contribute to our knowledge about the presentation of introduction sessions to maximise the provision of information, what children need to effectively read and fully understand participant information materials, and the application of structured research activities. The discussion that follows will look at each of these issues in turn.

#### *4.4.1 Introduction Session*

In approaching the children as social actors in the research process, the main aim of the introduction session was to provide potential participants with sufficient and appropriate information about the research to enable them to make an informed



decision regarding participation. This aim was influenced by my view of the child in the research process from the social child perspective (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2, p. 62) and my subsequent desire to minimize the power imbalance between adult researcher and child volunteer within the school setting. To this end, in an attempt to facilitate the active participation of children in the recruitment and informed consent processes the introduction session was conducted with the aid of an A4 Participant Information Letter and a Consent Form.

In endeavouring to create rapport and reduce the power differential between the children and me, I had agreed with the school co-ordinator that the introduction sessions would take the form of Circle Time, during the course of which pupils would have the opportunity to interview me about the study. However, the introduction sessions did not proceed as planned rather, they followed a more educational approach: I stood at the front of the class with the children sitting behind their desks and delivered a didactic introduction session as opposed to a more active one (David et al, 2001). It is possible that this style of delivery made it difficult for the children to understand my role as a researcher, which in turn had an impact on their understanding of the information materials and the process of informed consent (David et al., 2001). Furthermore, the intrusion of the class teacher in the completion of the consent forms in Class 1 will have confounded the outcomes of the informed consent process. Despite my attempts with the introduction sessions to ensure that I, rather than the school or the class teacher, managed the presentation of the research and the informed consent process, the class teacher in this case was able to exert her authority over my methods (David et al., 2001). A practice that presented me with an ethical dilemma and one that I did not feel in a position to challenge in front of

her class. On reflection, it would have been more appropriate to provide envelopes and a sealed post box in which children could have posted their forms, which would have protected their anonymity and enhanced their freedom of choice (Edwards & Alldred, 1999).

Notwithstanding these limitations, the volunteer rates suggest that over three-quarters of children, but by no means all, consented to participate in the study. When compared with the high response rates of other studies based in the school setting (e.g., Eslea & Smith, 2000), suggests that maybe the introduction session enabled children to give their informed dissent. Denscombe and Aubrook (1992, p. 352) argue that “high-pupil response rates achieved in school-based studies” are due to a form of institutional coercion to participate. The school is inscribed with differential power relations and, as such, “adults control children’s use of time, occupation of space, choice of clothing, [and] times of eating” (Robinson & Kellett, 2004, p. 91). Thus, if a school and class teacher have demonstrated their willingness for his or her class to participate in an introduction session it may be hard for an individual child to decline to participate (Hill, 2005). Furthermore, children may perceive taking part in research as just another form of schoolwork and, as such, take participation for granted (Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992; Kellet & Ding, 2004; Masson, 2004). In an attempt to reduce the power imbalance between potential participants and myself in the present study and to increase the children’s capacity to give or withhold informed consent, I adopted an approach of ‘opting in’ rather than ‘opting out’ (Alderson, 2004; Robinson & Kellett, 2004). It may be, therefore, that the inclusion of the introduction session increased the children’s capacity for choice about whether to participate thereby resulting in decreased volunteer rates (France, 2004).

It has been argued that issues of confidentiality and anonymity are likely to have an effect upon a child's consent to participate and, as such, need to be clearly explained to prospective participants (Davis, 1998; Masson, 2004; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Most of the children in the present study indicated that they had understood about the right to withdraw and the issue of confidentiality. Whether or not this understanding is linked with children's consent to participate is unknown. To date, only a limited amount of research has been conducted that specifically explores the relationship between children's understanding of confidentiality and their agreement to participate in research. However, a number of studies exploring children's understanding of their research rights have shown that their comprehension of abstract issues such as confidentiality is not straightforward (e.g., Abramovitch, Freedman, Thoden, & Nicolich, 1991; Hurley & Underwood, 2002). Thus, Abramovitch et al., (1991) suggested that children as old as 12 years may not fully understand or believe that what they say during research would be entirely confidential. While their lack of acceptance of the nature of confidentiality may not appear to limit children's capacity to consent to participate in research, Abramovitch et al. (1991) argue that it may have serious implications for the results in terms of honesty and openness.

While over one third of children said that they had not had the opportunity to ask questions, a small number said that they were not happy with the answers to their questions and a minority said that they had not had enough information about the study. There may have been three related reasons for this. First, the children's participation in the question and answer session may have been constrained by the formality of the school setting (Alderson, 2004). While it has been argued in the



literature that factors such as when and where research takes place, and who is present is likely to have an impact on what children will talk about (e.g., O’Kane, 2000), I would argue that the same applies to the informed consent procedure within the framework of an introduction session. Furthermore, it is possible that the children experienced the class teachers’ presence as an invasion of their privacy in terms of the teacher knowing what questions they had asked if they had indeed asked one. Second, it may be that the children were not satisfied with the answers to their questions because I did not effectively communicate with them in a clear and unambiguous fashion, nor did I effectively listen to their questions and answer them sufficiently (Alderson, 2004). Third, it is possible that the didactic style of delivery of the introduction session described earlier (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5.4, p. 101), or the accompanying materials (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1, p. 96) did not engage the children fully enough either to provide them with sufficient information, or to enable them to ask questions.

Ironically, during the introduction session, and as one child pointed out during evaluation of the A4 Participant Information Letter, the children were taking part in the research and providing data before they had actually consented to participate (Edwards & Alldred, 1999). Thus, completion of the Consent Form provided a means of collecting data before the children had actually consented to participate in the study. David et al. (2001) suggest that this process highlights the contradictory nature of giving information as a basis for gaining informed consent. In an attempt to provide potential participants with full information regarding the research, in order to ensure their understanding and to aid their decision with regard to participation,

children were already participating in research, through taking part in the introduction session.

In addition to the limitations of the presentation structure of the introduction sessions discussed above, I was aware from the outset of the limitations of the A4 Participant Information Letter (e.g., business-style) and the Consent Form, since they had been designed and written by adults. Given that the children themselves in the focus group discussions evaluated these documents, their limitations will be discussed fully in the next section.

#### *4.4.2 Participant Information Materials*

A small proportion of children said that they had not read the A4 Participant Information Letter. This may have been for a number of reasons. Not reading the information letter may have been a form of passive withdrawal from the introduction session (Langston, Abbott, Lewis, & Kellett, 2004; Mahon et al., 1996). Given that the children had not volunteered for the introduction session (a dilemma that I will return to in Chapter 9, Section 9.3.1, p. 416), and given the power inequalities prevailing in the classroom setting mentioned earlier, it may be that disengagement with the information materials was the only course of action open to those children who did not wish to attend. On the other hand, it may have been that the children did not find the business-style letter attractive and therefore were not motivated to read it (Brookshire, Scharff, & Moses, 2002; Elster & Simons, 1985; Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003). Alternatively, it may have been because the information materials were considered neither accessible nor readable (France, 2004). It is to these last two issues that this section now turns.

Aim 2 of the exploratory study was to consult with children about what they need to effectively read and fully understand participant information materials regarding participation in research about school bullying. In terms of what children need to effectively read and fully understand participant information materials, this study revealed that participants preferred: (a) a 10-point sans serif font; (b) short passages of text; (c) the presence of visual stimuli; (d) the use of colour; (e) easy, informal vocabulary; and (f) minimal but clear information. These preferences suggest that participants were concerned with the physical appearance of the materials as well as the legibility (the ease with which an individual can distinguish characters) and readability (the ease with which an individual reads and comprehends the text) (Weiss, 1982; Woods, Davis, & Scharff, 2005), in relation to design, layout, vocabulary and content. The participants' visual preferences can be explained in terms of findings from previous research that focused on the physical aspects of the text itself (e.g., font type and size, use of visual stimuli), while the language and content preferences can be explained in terms of children's language skills and the process of learning to read.

In terms of the physical characteristics of the text, such as font type and font size, Kanfer and Ackerman (1989) suggest that humans have finite attentional resources that can be devoted to any given task. Thus, if the text is easier to read, less attentional resources are required for the process of reading. Instead, these cognitive resources can be employed to attend to the message in the text, resulting in deeper processing and easier recall of the information presented. Accordingly, if we want to enable children to make informed decisions about whether or not to consent to



participate in research, we need to ensure that information materials are easy to read, thereby maximising understanding and the ability to make an informed decision.

With regard to the font type and font size, the present results indicate that participants' preference was for a large, fancy, bold font. Specifically, during the course of the evaluation activity, participants expressed a preference for the typeface used in the ChildLine booklet, which was a sans serif font, approximately 10-point size, to either the 12-point, serif font used in the A4 Participant Information Letter, or the approximately 9-point, sans serif font used in *Checkpoints*. In a study involving 80 children from kindergarten through to fourth grade which focused upon the effects of font type and font size on the legibility of printed matter, results showed that a sans serif font (e.g., Arial) was more legible than a serif font which increased its readability (e.g., Times New Roman) (Woods et al., 2005). It has been suggested that because sans serif fonts have uniform stroke widths and an absence of serifs (the fine lines that extend horizontally from the main strokes of a letter), they are less likely to act as visual noise, stressing the visual system, and therefore more likely to increase legibility (Woods et al., 2005). Serif fonts, on the other hand, which have the presence of serifs and proportional spacing, have been shown to lower legibility, according to Yager, Aquilante and Plass (1998). With regard to the present findings, it might be possible to explain participants' preference for the font type used in the ChildLine booklet in terms of the absence of serifs thus making the text easier to read. This suggests that the use of a sans serif font in participant information materials may increase the legibility of the material, which in turn will increase its readability. In terms of font size, Woods et al., (2005) showed that while an 18-point size font was found to be more legible than a smaller point size (12-point) for

kindergarteners and first graders, after first grade point sizes, which ranged from 10-point to 20-point, showed no significant influence. In the present study, on the one hand, participants expressed a preference for a large font. On the other, when presented with the three stimulus materials, all using different font sizes, they preferred the middle-size font (10-point) used in the ChildLine booklet. While this appears contradictory, it may be possible to explain this preference in terms of the presence of other preferred physical characteristics in the ChildLine booklet, such as the use of colour, text boxes and cartoons, in combination with a sans serif font.

Furthermore, regarding the amount of text, participants in the present study indicated that they found the text in the A4 Participant Information Letter too long and difficult to read. Previous research suggests that the passage length of text may also influence the comprehension of the material (Gasser, Boeke, Haffernan, & Tan, 2005). For example, Surber (1992) found that when participants were given either a long or a short textbook passage to study, those who read the short passage spent substantially more time per word reading than those who were given the long passage. Thus, in the present study, if participants spent less time per word reading, as this earlier research suggests, their understanding of the information overall may have been reduced. This suggests, therefore, that the use of short passages or chunks of text in information materials may be easier for children to read and understand. This may explain participants' preference for alternative modes of imparting information such as text boxes, competitions, quizzes, mazes, word searches, and graphs. It may also be that children prefer these modes of communication since they have been learning about, and becoming familiar with, printed text through their daily encounters with

environmental print (cereal boxes, milk cartons, advertisements and street signs) (Palincsar & Perry, 1995).

In addition to paying attention to the physical characteristics of information materials, researchers need to be aware of the motivational, affective and cognitive benefits of utilizing appropriate visual stimuli thereby increasing the understanding of information materials, which in turn will make the informed consent process more meaningful to prospective participants. With regard to the use of images, participants did not find *Checkpoints* appealing as they thought the front cover unattractive, considering the photograph to be unsuitable for a primary school-aged audience. On the other hand, participants preferred the look of the ChildLine booklet, which used cartoon characters throughout. Previous research suggests that pictures and illustrations can serve an affective or motivational function for pupils. For example, pictures and illustrations can draw attention to a text by making it both colourful and interesting; they can motivate children to read; they can make reading a text more enjoyable; they can result in positive attitudes towards reading in general; and, they can influence the time readers are willing to spend on a text (Brookshire et al., 2002; Elster & Simons, 1985; Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003). Furthermore, pictures and diagrams help readers to comprehend and remember texts by enriching or elaborating upon the text itself (Glenberg & Langston, 1992). For example, Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson (2003) found in their work as teachers of struggling middle-school readers that the use of illustrations facilitated pupil's use of mental images as they read, thus enhancing their comprehension of the text. More recently, in a study involving 71 first and third graders from elementary school, Brookshire et al. (2002) investigated the influence of illustration styles on children's



comprehension and book preferences using three combinations of text and/or illustrations. Their results suggest that in the illustration-text condition children achieved higher scores on the comprehension scale than in the text-only or illustration-only conditions. Furthermore, in terms of colour, they found that children preferred bright book illustrations significantly more than sombre illustrations with a trend towards realistic illustrations rather than abstract ones. These findings support participants' preferences for the presence of illustrations and the use of colour in the present study.

At the same time as paying attention to the design and layout, the results presented here indicate that researchers also need to pay attention to the language and style of content of information materials. In the present study, participants expressed a preference for easier, less formal vocabulary and minimal but clear information about the research. From a developmental perspective, it is possible to explain these findings in terms of stages of reading development (e.g., Oakhill, 1995). Adopting a stage model of reading in terms of explaining the present findings would suggest that printed materials aimed at 9- to 11-year-olds need to take into account their age in order that the vocabulary and the style of writing is appropriate for their stage of reading. The expectations for children of any age have some general basis; however, Rogoff (2003) suggests that it is important not to accord too much precision to age expectations for particular activities such as reading. Thus, from a socio-cultural perspective the activity of reading is not broken down into component stages, rather it is conceptualized in terms of a holistic activity emphasizing children's prior experiences with text (i.e., the amount and variety of text to which children have been exposed) (Palincsar & Perry, 1995). From this perspective, the reading of

participant information materials can be viewed as a constructive activity in which the reader is connecting prior cultural and linguistic knowledge with the information that he or she is encountering in the text and, therefore, a lack of comprehension can be understood in terms of a lack of experience (Palincsar & Perry, 1995).

#### *4.4.3 Structured Research Activities*

With regard to the use of structured research activities, the analysis of the transcripts revealed five key categories: research as just another form of schoolwork, research as a different from schoolwork, interactions among participants, information about the study and ethical issues.

Regardless of the open-ended instructions and despite my ongoing encouragement that there was no correct way in which to execute the leaflet design, the results revealed that many participants carried it out according to such an agenda, continually seeking guidance and reassurance throughout the activity. While the results revealed that participants quickly and enthusiastically took responsibility for structuring the execution of their leaflet designs, they would continually compare their progress with that of their neighbour's, such was their need for 'getting it right'. They did this through a process of comparing their work with each other's and remarking upon the similarities and differences observed between them. All participants were able to complete a leaflet design, suggesting that such questioning and checking for guidance and reassurance was not an indication that they were incompetent at carrying out the task, rather, it suggests that the participants framed the exercise as another school-based activity in which they could either fail or succeed (Davis, 1998). Such seeking

for reassurance, along with permission-seeking dialogue, suggests that participants regarded me, the adult researcher, as an authority figure within the research process. This dynamic was further exemplified by participants' need to call me "Miss". It has been suggested that this hierarchical view of research relations highlights the power differential between adult researcher and child participant (Christensen & James, 2000b). This power differential, one that already exists between adults and children, particularly between teachers and pupils in the school context, accentuates the role of the adult researcher as expert, and perpetuates the notion that children only have competencies relative to adult competencies, ones that require continual judgement and assessment (Christensen & James, 2000b). Of course, in undertaking research within the school context, researchers are entering a setting not only structured according to age, but also explicitly linked to educational competencies (David et al., 2001).

The present study revealed that participants wanted to put their names on their finished work. Christensen and James (2000b) argue that nowhere is the framing of research as another form of schooling more clearly seen than in this question asked by many children towards the end of a task. Through the naming of their work, children are not only able to claim their authorship and ownership of it, thereby acknowledging their responsibility for it, but within the school context, the naming of a piece of work permits the class teacher to record the progress of an individual child in terms of intellectual and academic achievement (Christensen & James, 2000b). However, within the research context the naming of activity sheets and leaflet designs clearly infringes the right to confidentiality.



While the results of the present study suggest that children frame structured research activities from within an educational framework, a second category to emerge was participation in research as different from schoolwork. Most participants received the structured research activities favourably especially as they perceived them to be an interesting and unusual alternative to their usual schoolwork (Punch, 2002b). In the sense that the results suggest that participants view participation as ‘not working’, this is most clearly demonstrated by their interest in the timing of the focus groups, in terms of participation as fun and, therefore, a break from education (David et al., 2001). For example, participants were keen to miss lessons, in particular maths, and in some cases wanted to prolong the length of the focus group, a result that concurs with previous research (Edwards & Alldred, 1999). Given that the school dictated the time allocation for participating in the focus groups, Denscombe and Aubrook (1992) suggest that missing lessons, more than anything, will influence the high participation rates. Despite this, on a number of occasions when sessions overran and following negotiation, participants were happy for focus groups to continue into their free time, that is, their playtime and lunchtime. Indeed, previous research suggests that children’s motivations for participating in research are respectable. For example, results of a three-year, qualitative research project designed to ascertain children’s perception and understanding of being involved in a longitudinal epidemiological and genetic study of child health, in particular their ethical protection, suggested that participants’ motivations for participation included direct benefit to one’s self, and the benefits of the research to other children (Goodenough, Williamson, Kent, & Ashcroft, 2004).

The present results demonstrated that copying was a strategy that some participants employed in several activities, most notably during the brainstorming exercises, and during the leaflet design activity. It has been noted elsewhere that copying in the research context might reveal how children differentiate between 'school work' and 'research work' in terms of defining participation in focus groups as 'not working' (Christensen & James, 2000b). Thus, copying engenders a feeling of sameness and provides a feeling of belongingness. Not only does this mask any potential differences among children, but also copying induces a sense of sharing in both the process of the activity and in the presentation of the final product. On the other hand, within the context of the classroom, copying is actively discouraged; indeed children are often penalized for it.

The results revealed that the biros provided for the execution of the activities were perceived as superior to the pencils provided within the classroom context and, as such, were considered very desirable by a number of participants. The perceived superiority of the materials provided in the research context over the materials provided in the school context offers a further example of participants framing research as different from schoolwork. It could be also be argued that this perception, along with the retention of, and fiddling with, materials and equipment by some participants, demonstrates their view of me as an adult with power and control, against whom they felt the need to challenge my authority and assert their autonomy (Corsaro, 1999). It also reveals a contrast between the participants' opportunity to use the biros provided howsoever they wish, with

that of their opportunities in the classroom, where children can only use biro when “Miss” has handed them out.

To a lesser or greater degree, all the focus group transcripts were characterized by chatting, joking, laughing and the kind of acting out that goes on amongst school children, features of focus groups with children that have been recorded elsewhere (Kitzinger, 1994). While this made the groups seem unmanageable at times (and certainly when attempting to transcribe the data), overall the results demonstrate that the structured research activities seemed to facilitate co-operative and supportive behaviour among participants. Particularly in the leaflet design activity, as they worked, participants happily chatted with one another about their families and their social lives, for example. In this sense, it has been suggested that structured research activities can be seen as an accompaniment to socializing (Christensen & James, 2000a). Furthermore, the shared experience of participating in structured research activities can sometimes actively facilitate the discussion of otherwise ‘taboo’ topics (Kitzinger, 1994). Thus, in the present study the composition of the participants, combined with the leaflet design activity, facilitated a disclosure about an episode of teacher-pupil bullying. Conversely, the data revealed that the execution of the activities in the presence of other children also provided the opportunity for conflict in terms of verbal bullying, and arguing about the availability of materials. While Kitzinger (1994) holds that such incidents may cause discomfort to group members, particularly if directed at individuals within the group, it could be argued that this conflict provided a means of bringing the children together, helping them to



organize the structured research activities and construct social order within the group (Corsaro, 1999).

It has been suggested that the use of structured research activities helps to develop rapport, and create a relaxed atmosphere, both of which are likely to increase participants' confidence, encouraging them to talk more freely and honestly (Hood et al., 1996; Punch, 2002a). Thus, it was noticeable that towards the end of the leaflet design activity (and having worked with the children on three different occasions by this point), participants felt comfortable and competent enough to spontaneously ask for further information about the study. Not only, therefore, will creating rapport encourage children to talk more freely and honestly, hence improving the quality of the data, the results presented here suggest that it will also enhance the opportunity for a thorough debriefing and discussion about the research at the end. It could be argued that the types of questions that participants asked (i.e., regarding sampling, the nature and length of the focus groups, the researcher's role, how the data would be used), provide the researcher with information about what is important to children in terms of the topics that they require to be included in participant information materials. It also suggests that participants needed reassurance that participating in the research had been worthwhile and that good use would be made of the data (Goodenough et al., 2004).

The results also revealed that some participants made use of the stickers ("well done" and ticks) provided for the leaflet design activity as a reward at the end of the session. This finding supports the notion documented in the literature of the need for a reward (e.g., France, 2000). While I had planned to compensate the participants on

completion of the study, the participants' actions offered me a simple and economical solution for providing an immediate reward.

The findings revealed that in a number of instances participants wanted to leave the research but did not do so directly. On several occasions, wanting to leave was framed in terms of not engaging with the structured research activity; and on another occasion, one participant explicitly stated that he would prefer to attend a singing lesson, although he did not directly state that he wanted to leave. While participants were advised of the voluntary nature of participation, and of their right to withdraw without having to give a reason, both at the introduction session, and again at the start of each focus group, these results suggest that in reality it is actually difficult for a ten-year old to get up and leave the room. These findings concur with results from other studies. For example, Goodenough et al. (2004) found that several participants were unable or unhappy to complete an activity but felt powerless to refuse.

Furthermore, in a study that examined children's understanding of their rights in the research setting, Bruzzese and Fisher (2003) found that the right to withdraw was not well comprehended by 7<sup>th</sup> graders. They suggest that one possible explanation for this was that children's consent was preceded by prior parental permission, and as such, participants did not feel that they genuinely had permission to withdraw.

Furthermore, Abramovitch et al. (1991) found that children understood the right to withdraw in terms of being able to stop participation only temporarily and that there would be some negative consequences. They also suggest that the role of the parents in the consent process is a source of hidden pressure which reduces children's ability to withdraw freely if they so wish. The findings further suggested that although children were theoretically free to withdraw, they were worried about upsetting the



researcher if they did so (Abramovitch et al., 1991). A further consideration, not documented in the literature, is the dilemma for a participant withdrawing from a focus group, with regard to re-entering the classroom without their fellow participants under the gaze of their teacher and peers. This clearly infringes their research rights in terms of confidentiality and anonymity.

The need for some participants to name their activity sheets and their leaflet designs, and have their work returned to them, also presents the researcher with a dilemma as such practices contradict efforts to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Indeed, such processes suggest that participants do not fully understand the concepts of confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, despite agreeing to the recording of the focus groups, the references to the presence of the tape-recording equipment, and indeed the direct questioning of what the tape-recorder was for, also suggest that the issue of confidentiality was not fully understood by all participants. As noted earlier, children's comprehension of abstract issues such as confidentiality is not straightforward according to the results of a number of studies exploring participant's understanding of their research rights (Abramovitch et al., 1991; Hurley & Underwood, 2002).

Overall, the results suggest a number of emerging theoretical strands. First, the results illustrate what Davis (1998) terms the interaction between researcher and host society, that is, the interaction of two cultures. This 'cultural resistance' between the research culture, which includes ethics, roles, tools and theories, and school culture offers a means of developing an understanding about research with children. Second, and from this standpoint, the results highlight the



dilemma of viewing the child as a social actor, with the right to choose and take action independently of adults (Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000); on reflection, the children do not necessarily enter the research context perceiving themselves as such. Rather they enter the research context as an individual embedded within their school, family and community contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As such, they may have little knowledge and experience of participating in research and exerting their research rights, for example. This presents an ethical challenge to the researcher working with children in the school context, a challenge that will continue to be addressed and reflected upon in Chapter 9.

#### *4.5 Methodological Issues*

It is apparent that the procedures employed in the exploratory study enabled children to play an active part in the research process. Overall, participants appeared to view the activities favourably and participated with enthusiasm. The chatting, joking and laughing that accompanied the activities suggested participants were having fun and contributed to a cooperative and supportive atmosphere (Hood et al., 1996; Punch, 2002a). Indeed, the activities helped to develop rapport between the participants and me such that a process of spontaneous debriefing occurred at the end of the leaflet design activity (Harden et al., 2000; Kellett & Ding, 2004). On completion of the leaflet design activity, some participants awarded themselves with “well done” stickers intended for use in the activity, indicating their desire for recognition of their participation. I, therefore, established the practice of giving each participant a “well done” sticker at the end of subsequent studies. Furthermore, I designed and produced certificates of participation for subsequent studies. It was expected that

these would act as an immediate recognition of children's time and help in participating in the research (Hill, 2005).

It was, however, necessary to make some modifications to the access and recruitment methods. In terms of providing information about the study, these findings suggest that prospective participants' understanding was limited by the didactic presentation of the introduction sessions, and by the design and presentation of the A4 Participant Information Letter and Consent Form. Furthermore, the recruitment process, and in one instance, the informed consent procedure, was hindered by the actions of the class teachers. Consequently, I decided that in the initial stages of the access process for Studies 1 and 2, I would arrange individual meetings with the relevant class teachers in order to introduce the research and myself, and to discuss any issues or ideas they might have regarding the involvement of their class. It was anticipated that by involving class teachers in the research process prior to the introduction sessions, they would experience a sense of ownership and commitment, which, in turn, would encourage their cooperation and support thereby maximizing children's voluntary participation. When arranging the introduction sessions with the schools I decided that in future I would request locations other than the children's classrooms in which to conduct them. It was envisaged that this would reduce the potential for children to perceive the introduction session and the subsequent research as part of the curriculum and, as such, as a compulsory activity (David et al., 2001; Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992; Morrow & Richards, 1996). In addition, it characterized an attempt to reduce the opportunity for the children to perceive me as an authority figure in terms of occupying the formal, adult space of the teacher at the front of the classroom

(Goodenough et al., 2003). Furthermore, to avoid the intrusion of the class teacher in the informed consent process, I would invite children to place their consent forms in a brown envelope and post into a sealed post box. It was anticipated that this procedure would ensure the active consent or dissent of the child and maintain anonymity and confidentiality (David et al., 2001).

Second, I designed and produced a participation information leaflet and an informed consent form to reflect the results of this study, which indicated what children require to effectively read and fully understand participant information leaflets and informed consent forms. Full details of these are presented in Chapter 5. The results of the Exploratory Study indicated that children's preferences were for greater legibility and readability of information materials, in terms of design, layout, language and style of content. Since previous research suggests that legibility and readability have an impact on the process of reading, which in turn has an effect upon the comprehension and remembering of text, it was anticipated that child friendly information materials would facilitate effective reading, understanding and remembering of the information needed to make an informed decision regarding participation.

#### *4.6 Conclusion*

This chapter described how the exploratory study produced some interesting and unexpected findings, some consistent with previous research, others not. It was also apparent that the use of structured research activities was generally appropriate and effective. However, evidence suggested the need for modifications to the method, in particular access and recruitment procedures, and the materials, specifically the



provision of information to prospective participants. Furthermore, the findings suggested that *Checkpoints* was not an accessible resource with which children could engage and, therefore, it was deemed necessary to remove it from the programme of research. The next chapter of this thesis, Chapter 5, describes the method and procedure for Studies 1 and 2, the overall aim of which was to engage children meaningfully as active participants in the research process in order to explore their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices.

## CHAPTER 5

### Studies 1 and 2 Method

#### *5.1 Overview*

The overall aim of this programme of research was to engage children meaningfully as active participants in the research process in order to explore their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices. Specifically, this research had three key objectives:

- to explore children's emotional attributions and moral reasoning in relation to school bullying, and their causal understanding of the bullying relationship;
- to explore children's understanding of the role of the social group context in which school bullying takes place;
- to explore the coping strategies children consider using to address school bullying.

In order to explore children's understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices, I sought to engage them as active and competent research participants. Founded on the belief that respecting children's rights to freedom of participation and freedom of expression (UN, 1989) demands the use of appropriate research methods, I adopted a number of procedures and practices to support the notion that children can be informed, involved, consulted and, ultimately, listened to and heard. Consequently, I carried out an exploratory study, the overall aim of which was to explore the employment of child friendly protocols with primary school children that

would support children's voluntary and active participation in the study of school bullying. Based on the findings of the exploratory study a number of modifications were made to the access and recruitment procedures. To facilitate the voluntary participation of children I resolved to involve class teachers at an earlier stage of the recruitment process, that is, prior to the introduction sessions. To eliminate the notion that children would view participating in the research as a compulsory activity I determined to request locations other than the children's classrooms in which to conduct the introduction session. To maximize the effectiveness of the information materials and the informed consent process, I designed and produced a child friendly Participant Information Leaflet and Consent Form. To ensure informed consent was voluntary and anonymous I employed the use of a sealed post box in which children could despatch their completed consent forms.

Furthermore, since the findings of the exploratory study regarding the use of structured research activities suggested that they were generally appropriate and effective their use informed my decision to adopt a pictorial vignette technique for use in Study 1. In view of my perception of children as social actors and in my concomitant desire to minimize the power differentials between researcher and researched, I considered it would be beneficial to use the *SCAN* bullying cartoons (Almeida, del Barrio et al., 2001), a series of pictorial vignettes depicting a hypothetical story of peer bullying. The vignette technique typically offers researchers "a method that can elicit perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes from responses or comments to stories depicting scenarios and situations" (Barter & Renold, 1999, p. 2). Not only would this method offer children the opportunity to express themselves freely, at the same time it would facilitate the reduction of the



power imbalance between adult researcher and child participant in a number of ways (Barter & Renold, 2000). First, I considered that the ‘story-telling nature’ of the technique would relax participants, fully engage children in the research encounter, and provide them with an interesting experience (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000). Second, I anticipated that the use of pictorial vignettes would offer children a non-threatening environment from within which a discussion of school bullying could take place since focusing on the vignettes would create a comfortable distance between the researcher and the participant, as well as emotional distance from the scenario (Barter & Renold, 2000; Jones et al., 1998). Third, I envisaged that since the participants themselves could decide if, and when, to disclose their personal experiences of school bullying, the use of pictorial vignettes would offer children the opportunity for greater control over the discussion of such a sensitive issue (Barter & Renold, 1999; Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000). Moreover, in view of the feedback from participants regarding the ChildLine booklet, which demonstrated that participants liked the “pictures”, “drawings” and “cartoon characters”, it was expected that employing the pictorial vignettes would be particularly appropriate for children since the *SCAN* bullying cartoons would provide a familiar medium for stimulation (Hazel, 1995).

Preliminary analysis of the children’s interview transcripts revealed interesting results, which indicated a complex understanding of peer relationships and deep insight into the interpersonal events and processes of daily school life.

Consequently, I conducted a second study to explore further their understanding of the role of the social group context in which bullying takes place. I envisaged that not only would this give children the opportunity to develop their accounts and

remind them of things that they might otherwise not have mentioned in addition it would offer a means of clarifying the preliminary findings (Hill, 1997).

Furthermore, I anticipated that employing a range of methods would provide different perspectives of how children perceive and experience their social worlds (Hennessy & Heary, 2005).

## 5.2 Design

The present programme of research was carried out during one academic year and consisted of one-to-one semi-structured interviews combined with a structured research activity in the autumn term, single-sex focus group discussions combined with a structured research activity in the spring term, and a four-hour activity session in the summer term. The activity session centred upon a short film entitled *Bully Dance* (Perlman, 2000), that focused on identifying bullying behaviours and coping strategies, and understanding the role of the bystander. For reasons of space restriction, the activity session is not reported here. It has, however, been published elsewhere (Jennifer, Cowie, & Bray, 2006).

In addition, approximately one week prior to the commencement of the one-to-one interviews an introduction session was conducted with each class to introduce the programme of research to prospective participants.

## 5.3 Participants

Participants, aged 10- to 11-years-old, were drawn from the Year 6 classes of two primary schools in a south-west London LEA, one a voluntary-aided faith school, the other a state school. Following parental permission to approach their child, all pupils

from Year 6 were invited to participate in the programme of research; all consented to take part (66 children). In actuality, not all volunteers were available to participate due to absence at the time of data collection. The implications of this will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 9, Section 9.3.1 (p. 416). The final sample for the one-to-one interviews sample, therefore, consisted of 30 males (47%) and 34 females (53%). For the focus group discussions, the final sample comprised sixty-two children, 30 males (48%) and 32 females (52%).

## 5.4 Materials

### 5.4.1 Introduction Session

During the introduction session, participants were recruited with the aid of a child friendly Participant Information Leaflet (see Figure 5.1) outlining the nature, aims and method of the study, together with details about participation, confidentiality, anonymity, the right to withdraw, and the intended outcomes of the research, and a Consent Form (see Figure 5.2 for an example). In the light of the results of the exploratory study reported in Chapter 4, Sections 4.3.1 (p. 120) and 4.3.2 (p. 123), that suggested that children's preferences were for greater legibility and readability, both in terms of design and layout and in terms of language and style of content, the information materials were reconceptualized and redesigned. Specifically, the Participant Information Leaflet and the Consent Form incorporated: (a) a 14-point, sans serif font (*Comic Sans MS*); (b) a logo from a leaflet designed by a participant in the exploratory study; and (c) colour. In addition, the Participant Information Leaflet, presented in a two-fold format, included a quotation from a leaflet designed



*When and where will the research take place?* It will take place during lesson time in a room in your school

*Who will take part?*  
Children from Year 6 who agree to join in

*What will you do with the information you collect?* The information will be used to write a report or a book about the views of children. Anything you say will be confidential - no-one else will know what you have said

*Do I have to take part?* No. Joining in is up to you and you are free to leave the research at any time without giving a reason

If you need someone to talk to after joining in with this research you might like to try:

- ◆ Your Class Teacher
- ◆ ChildLine 0800 1111
- ◆ [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- ◆ [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)
- ◆ [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

Designed and written with the help of Year 6 children at Granard Primary School, Wandsworth, London



Feeling Safe and Happy at School: listening to children



"Think Smart Take Part"  
(pupil, aged 10)

Figure 5.1(a). Child Friendly Participant Information Leaflet.



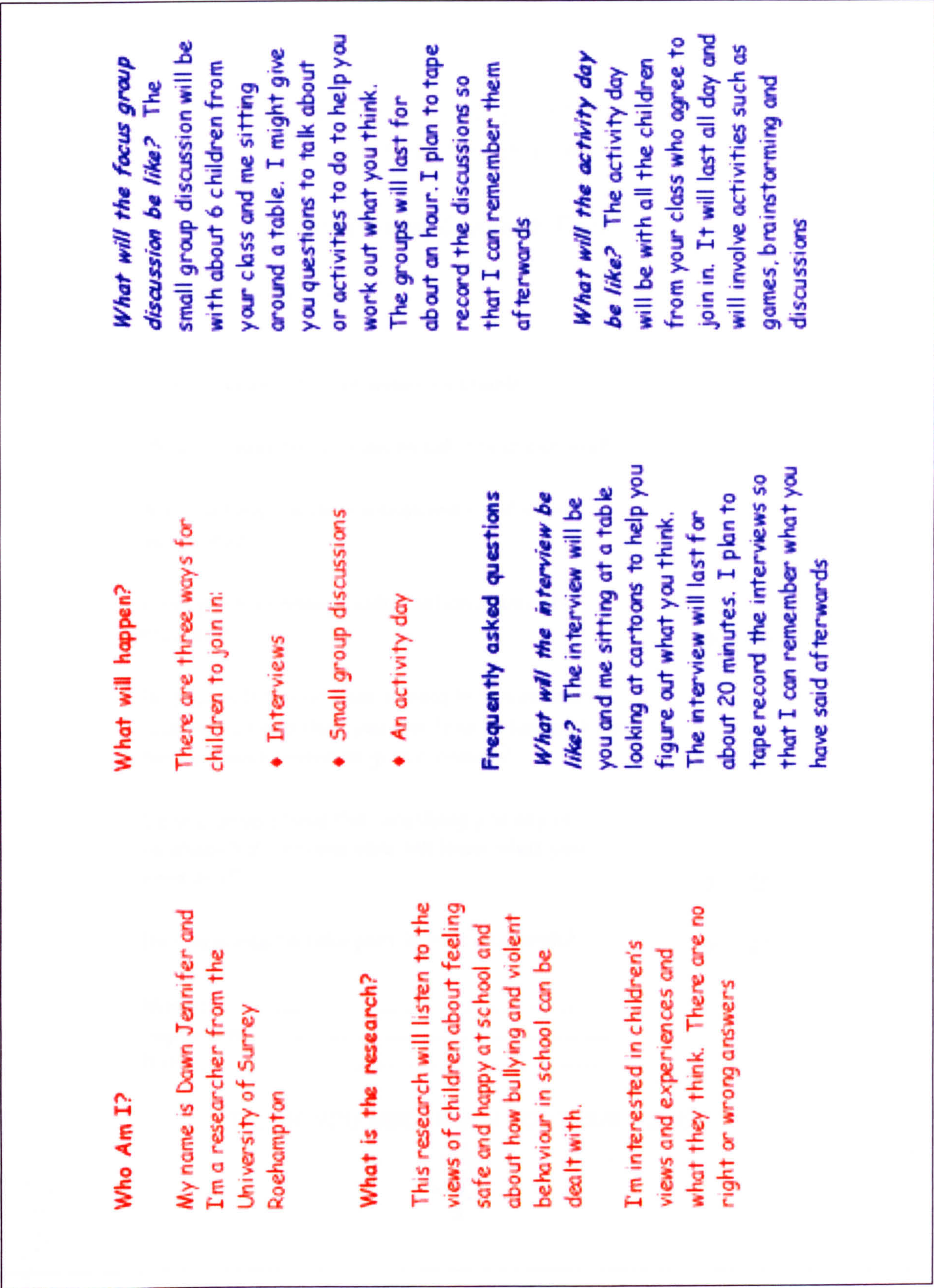


Figure 5.1(b). Child Friendly Participant Information Leaflet.



## Feeling Safe & Happy at School: listening to children

### Interview Consent Form

Please circle ☐ or ☐

	Yes	No
Have you read the Information Leaflet?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you had the chance to ask any questions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you happy with the answers to all your questions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you had enough information about the research?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you understand that joining in the research is up to you and that you are free to leave at any time without having to give a reason?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you understand that anything you say is confidential - no-one else will know what you have said?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you agree to take part in this research?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME**



Figure 5.2. Child Friendly Consent Form.



by a participant in the exploratory study; less text; easier, less formal vocabulary; and a Frequently Asked Questions section. Moreover, the Consent Form adopted the use of smiley and sad faces for “yes” and “no” responses respectively.

#### 5.4.2 Interviews

One-to-one interviews were carried out using a semi-structured interview schedule facilitated by the use of a series of pictorial vignettes depicting a hypothetical story of peer bullying adapted from the *SCAN* bullying cartoons (Almeida, del Barrio et al., 2001<sup>1</sup>). The intention of the story illustrated by the vignettes was to convey the idea of an imbalance of power and repeated aggressive behaviours such that the interpretation of the story was in terms of intentional and hurtful actions, rather than isolated or irregular events. The use of pictorial vignettes with children in the present study was deemed appropriate for a number of reasons. First, the use of such a stimulus provides a safe context within which participants can produce an account of the events portrayed, that combines previous personal knowledge and experience with the narrative elements of the hypothetical story (Almeida et al., 2001). Second, it is much less threatening for participants to talk about a bullying situation that they can personally relate to than to ask children directly about bullying in their school (Owens et al., 2000b). Third, it was anticipated that use of the vignettes would allow the children more control over if and when to disclose personal information (Barter & Renold, 2000). Furthermore, rather than employing a traditional semi-structured interview format, combining one-to-one interviews with a research activity represented an attempt to support the engagement of children in the research process as competent and social actors.

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank A. Almeida for kindly allowing the use of the *SCAN*

According to del Barrio et al. (2003), the results of their European study distinguished two levels of behaviour depicted by the vignettes: a) *aggression* in terms of episodic aggressive behaviours between the characters, and b) *bullying*. Aggression was cited by 12.5% of the sample, without explicitly mentioning bullying. The majority (87.5%) described the nature of the relationship as bullying. del Barrio et al. (2003) suggested that these results confirmed the adequacy of the cartoons to illustrate the bullying relationship, thus validating them as a stimulus to study children's constructions of the phenomenon.

However, whilst the *SCAN* bullying cartoons were successfully piloted in Portugal and Spain (Almeida et al., 2001; del Barrio et al., 2003), following informal discussions with a number of colleagues (psychologists, teachers and researchers), it was considered that the vignettes in their original form were not appropriate for the present study. Concern was expressed about the black and white, lifelike adolescent figures in respect of specific age and racial stereotypes, and the cultural specificity depicted by the architectural references and the lack of school uniforms, in terms of hinting at a particular cultural, ethnic and geographical uniformity (see Figure 5.3). It was therefore, considered necessary to modify and re-design the vignettes to reflect the UK sample in the current study with regard to: (a) primary school age; (b) ethnic diversity; and (c) primary school culture (i.e., the wearing of school uniform). In addition, the findings of the exploratory study reported in Chapter 4, Sections 4.3.1.3 (p. 122) and 4.3.1.4 (p. 123), which suggested that children preferred cartoon-style characters and the use of colour, were incorporated. Furthermore, given that research suggests that in the UK nearly one-third of 11-year-olds have tried smoking (Milton et al., 2004), whereas less than 10% of 12- to 13-year olds reported drinking alcohol

(Schuckit et al., 2005), it was considered appropriate to change the content of the coercion vignette from drinking to smoking. The *SCAN* bullying cartoons were, therefore, adapted and redesigned by a young art student aged 17-years-old to reflect these modifications.

The set of 14 A4-size pictorial vignettes included one neutral scenario (see Figure 5.4), and nine scenarios depicting psychologically and physically violent acts performed by one individual or by a group of peers (see Appendix N, p. 505). Behaviours included social exclusion, teasing, physical obstruction, attack on personal possessions, actual damage to personal possessions, group physical attack, coercion, blackmail, and social isolation (see Table 5.1 for a fuller description of each vignette). A short caption describing the content of the scenario was included at the bottom of each vignette (e.g., “This girl is new to the school and it’s her first day”). Where necessary, captions were re-written to address anomalies arising from translation into English, and to incorporate idiomatic vocabulary. For example, in vignette 5, “recess” was changed to “playtime”; and in vignette 7, “ground” was changed to “floor”. In addition, the captions for vignettes 3 and 8 were rewritten to reflect the changes made to the vignettes described above, that is, the wearing of school uniform and cigarette smoking, respectively.

To assess the modifications to the vignettes, pre-test interviews were carried out with twelve participants from the sample (see Section 5.5.5).



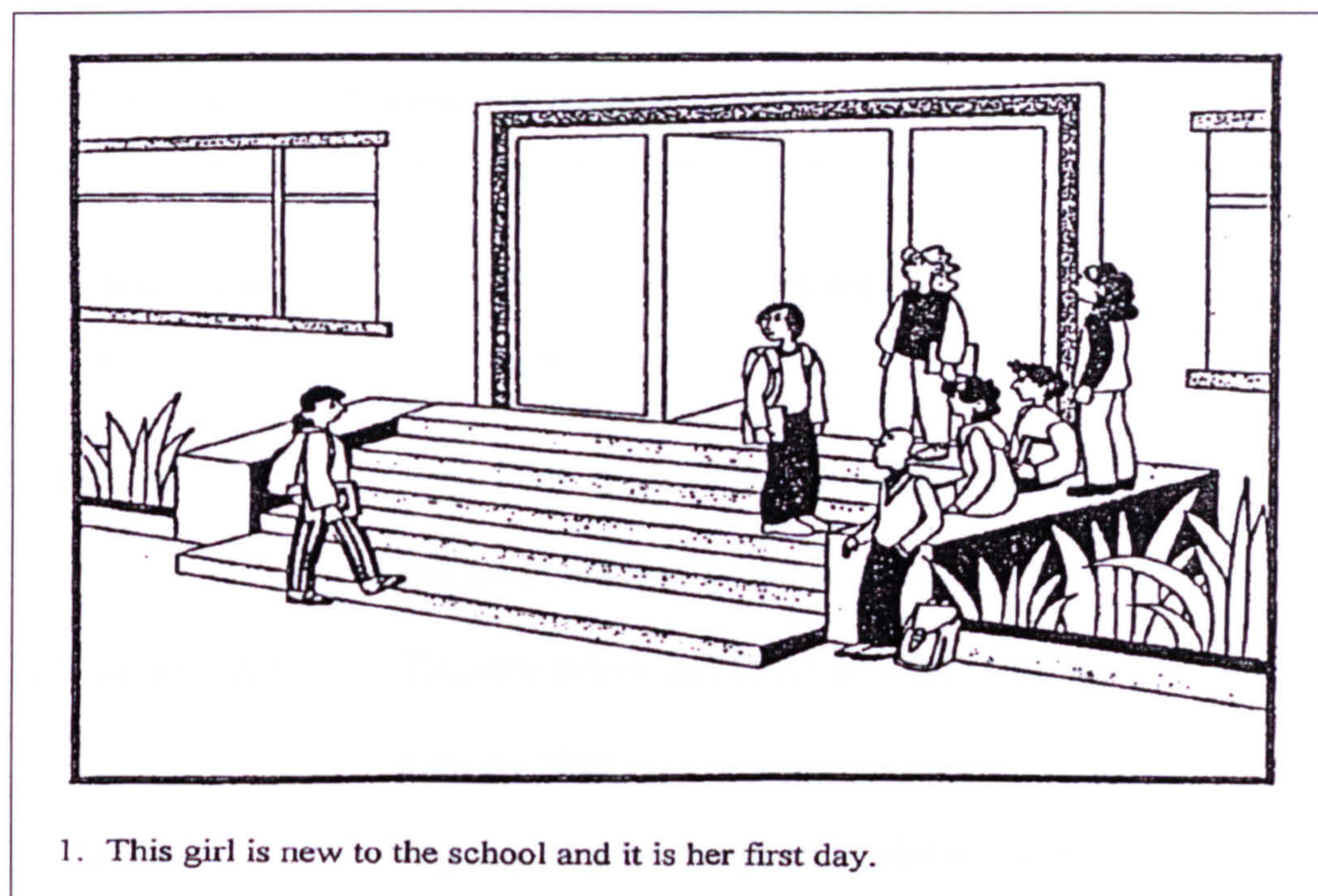


Figure 5.3. An example of one of the original *SCAN* bullying cartoons (Almeida, del Barrio et al., 2001).

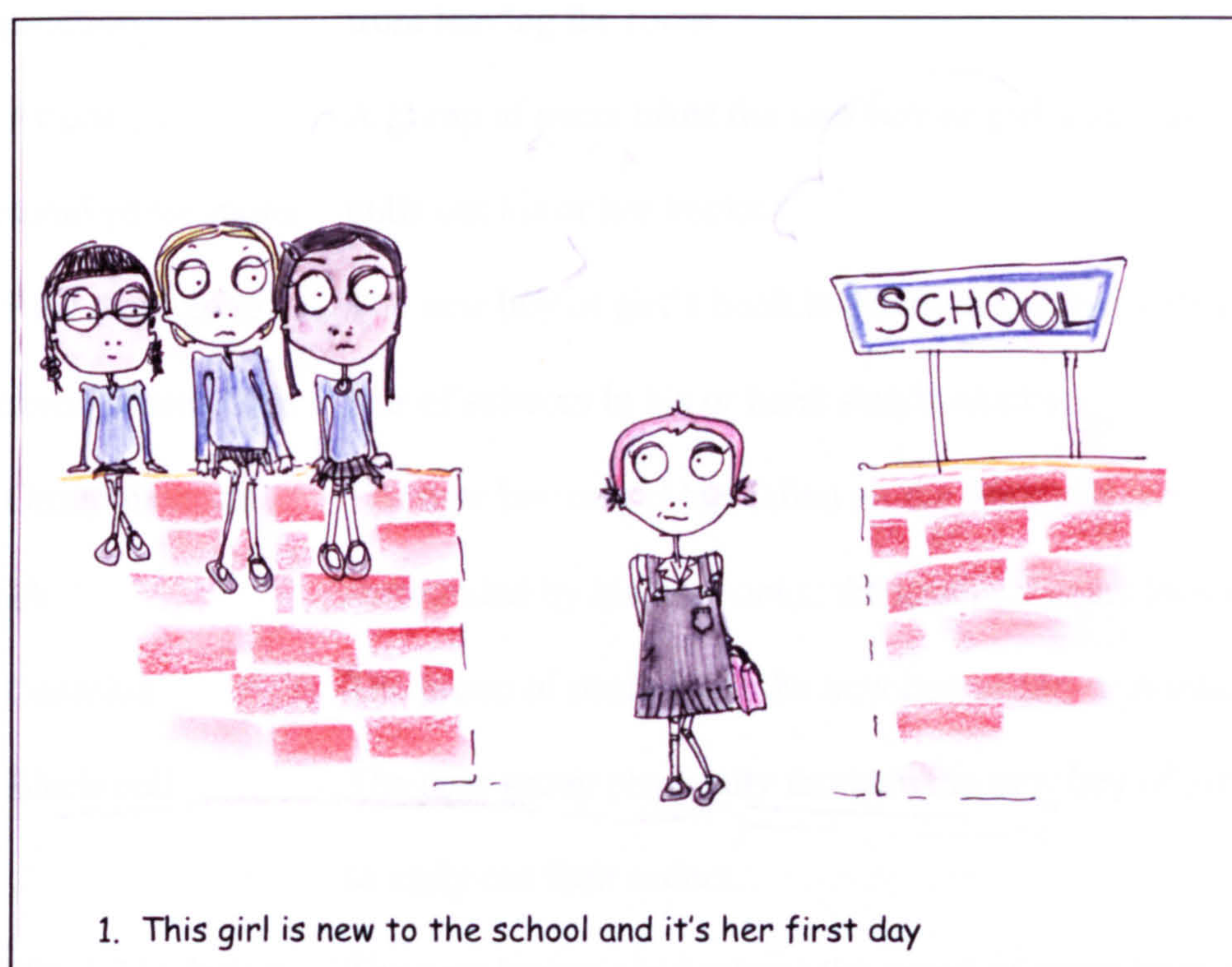


Figure 5.4. An example of one of the pictorial vignettes used in the present study.



Table 5.1

*Content of the Ten Pictorial Vignettes*

Behaviour	Caption
1. Neutral	A new boy or girl arrives at school on his or her first day observed by a group of peers.
2. Social exclusion	The new boy or girl looks on while a group of peers play together.
3. Teasing	A group of peers laugh and point at the new boy or girl's clothes.
4. Physical obstruction	A peer blocks the door to prevent the new boy or girl from leaving the room.
5. Attack on personal possessions	A group of peers takes the new boy or girl's bag and pulls out his or her books.
6. Real damage to personal possessions	The new boy or girl's book is destroyed; a peer with a pair of scissors in his or hand stands nearby.
7. Group physical attack	The new boy or girl has fallen on the floor and is surrounded by his/her books; the group of peers look on.
8. Coercion	The group of peers force the new boy or girl to smoke
9. Blackmail	The peer group physically threaten the new boy or girl to carry out their orders.
10. Social isolation	The new boy or girl looks at the group of peers from a distance.

The remaining four vignettes, each representing a different outcome to the story in terms of distinct roles taken by adults and peers, completed the set of vignettes (see Table 5.2). Although capable of empathizing with characters of the opposite gender, it has been noted that young participants concentrate on characters of their own gender (Hazel, 1995); therefore, a masculine and a feminine version of the hypothetical story were used such that the story characters matched the gender of the child.

Table 5.2  
*Content of the Four Story Outcomes*

Outcome	Caption
1. Optimistic	The children all play together
2. Pessimistic	The victim remains alone
3. Peer social support	The victim seeks the support of a peer
4. Adult social support	The victim seeks the support of an adult

During presentation of the vignettes, participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule devised to capture children’s knowledge and reasoning about bullying in school (del Barrio et al., 2003). The semi-structured interview schedule included questions about: (a) the nature of the relationship portrayed in the vignettes; (b) the causes attributed to bullying in school; (c) the general and moral emotional experiences attributed to the characters in the story; (d) how children



related to and empathised with the characters' emotional states; (e) types of coping strategies for addressing the situations depicted in the story; and (f) anticipated endings to the story. Where necessary, interview questions were re-written to address anomalies arising from translation into English, and to incorporate idiomatic vocabulary. In addition, in consideration of bullying from a wider social group context, questions relating to the role of characters other than the bully and the victim were included in the interview schedule. The full interview schedule is documented in Appendix O (p. 509).

### *5.4.3 Focus Group Discussions*

A brainstorming activity was used to generate a list of the features and characteristics that participants ascribed to each member of the bully group in the hypothetical story. The activity was conducted using a flipchart, flipchart pens, coloured Post-It notes and biros. The activity was facilitated with four of the vignettes used in the one-to-one interviews, that is, social exclusion (vignette 2), teasing (vignette 3), group physical attack (vignette 7) and blackmail (vignette 9) (see this chapter, Section 5.4.2, p. 171, for a full description).

## *5.5 Procedure*

### *5.5.1 Access and Recruitment*

The access and recruitment procedures described in Chapter 3, Section 3.5.1 (p. 98) resulted in telephone conversations and meetings with two head teachers who agreed for their schools to participate. Initial meetings were held with the head teacher of St

Nicholas Primary School<sup>2</sup> and the deputy head teacher of Westcott School at which time the nature of the research and how best to implement the study was discussed in further detail. A schedule was drafted for conducting the research during the academic year 2003/2004. It was agreed with senior staff that the introduction sessions and data collection would take place during lesson time rather than at playtime, lunchtime or during school assembly. Reflecting on the access and recruitment procedures for the exploratory study and the notion that class teachers needed to be involved at an earlier stage of the research process, I arranged meetings with each of the class teachers to introduce the research and myself, and to discuss any issues they might have; however, the class teacher from Westcott School missed the appointment.

### *5.5.2 Informed Consent*

Consent to participate was sought at three levels, from the head teacher on behalf of the school and the teaching staff, from the parents/carers, and from the children themselves. After consent had been granted from the head teacher using the Roehampton University Research Participant Consent Form (Appendix K, p. 499), the school sent a letter drafted by myself to parents/carers (see Appendix P, p. 514). Parents/carers were requested to contact the school should they not wish their child to be approached; no parent/carer did so. Bearing in mind the literature discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2 (p. 71), I adopted a principle of consent that demanded the active consent of the child (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998) on an ongoing basis (David et al., 2001). At the introduction session for the one-to-one interviews, and then again prior to the focus group discussions, consent to participate was sought as described in

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<sup>2</sup> All school and participant names have been changed throughout to ensure participant anonymity

Chapter 3, Section 3.5.2 (p. 99) using the Consent Form described above (see Figure 5.2). In the light of the results from the exploratory study, a number of changes were made to the informed consent procedure (see below). Prior to commencement of the interviews, one or two weeks after the introduction session, I checked that participants wished to continue to take part in the research. In addition, I reminded participants of their right to withdraw at any stage.

### *5.5.3 Confidentiality*

The approach to confidentiality described in Chapter 3, Section 3.5.3 (p. 100) was also adopted for this study. In addition, participants were reminded at the beginning of each interview and focus group discussion of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity. It should be noted that Westcott School's "open door" policy precluded complete anonymity.

### *5.5.4 Introduction Session*

An introduction session of approximately one-hour in length was conducted in each school during lesson time in the autumn term of 2003. Reflecting upon the methodological issues raised in conducting an introduction session in the exploratory study (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4.1, p. 140), and in an attempt to ensure that participation was entirely voluntary, I requested locations other than the children's classrooms in which to conduct them. This was for two reasons. First, it represented an effort to reduce the potential for the children to perceive the introduction session and the subsequent research as a form of school work and, as such, the assumption that participation was compulsory (Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992). Second, it characterized an attempt to present the research in a location other than at the front of



the classroom, a space in the school setting traditionally associated with the teacher as adult authority figure (Goodenough et al., 2003). At St Nicholas Primary School the introduction session was conducted in the school's performance room with the children, their class teacher and I all sitting on the floor in a circle. At Westcott School, it was conducted in the classroom with the children sitting on the carpeted area and me sitting in the class teacher's chair, with the teacher attending at the back of the room; both the conference room and the school hall were unavailable.

The Participant Information Leaflets were distributed to each child, which I then read aloud to the whole class to reduce any effects of reading ability. Children were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research. Following explanation of the key terms the children were invited to complete two Consent Forms, which consisted of seven questions to ascertain whether the children had understood the Participant Information Leaflet and whether they consented to participate (e.g., "Have you read the information leaflet?" and "Do you agree to take part in this research?"). Children were requested to respond to each item by circling either "yes" or "no". One copy was to be retained for children's own records and one was to be placed in the brown envelope provided and posted to me anonymously in a sealed post-box specifically made for the purpose. Reflecting upon the class teacher's intervention in the informed consent process in the exploratory study (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4.1, p. 140), this latter procedure was in an endeavour to ensure voluntary participation and complete anonymity (David et al., 2001).

### 5.5.5 *Pre-test*

To assess the modifications to the vignettes as outlined above pre-test interviews were carried out with twelve participants from the main sample (Vogt, 1999). The majority of these participants (82 %) described the nature of the relationship as bullying. The remaining 18% described the behaviours as aggression, without explicitly mentioning bullying. This was the intended outcome and supported the effectiveness of the pictorial vignettes to study children's constructions of bullying in school (Ojala & Nesdale, 2004). The data from the pre-test interviews were analyzed along with the data from the main study.

### 5.5.6 *Interviews*

One-to-one interviews were conducted during lesson time in November 2003, each lasting approximately 20 minutes. Following negotiation with individual children, some of the interviews extended into participants' playtime and lunchtime. Each interview commenced with standardized instructions regarding the general nature of the interview, confidentiality, anonymity and the right to withdraw (see Appendix O, p. 509). Furthermore, prior to commencing the interview, I checked that each participant wished to continue with their participation. With the agreement of all participants, audio tape recordings were collected for later transcription. At St Nicholas School, all interviews were conducted in a small room that had been converted from the nun's laundry room and recently refurbished. At Westcott School, all interviews were conducted in a small consulting room off a large conference room.

The first ten vignettes, which conveyed temporal and space continuity for the various aggressive behaviours, were laid out on a table one by one, in a pre-ordered sequence. I did not enter into discussion with participants regarding the captions; if any doubts were verbalised by the participant I avoided personal interpretation, rather I probed them about their guess about what might be happening in the particular vignette. Following presentation of the vignettes, participants were asked a series of questions to explore: how they interpreted the hypothetical story represented in the vignettes; what kind of causes they attributed to bullying; what kind of emotional experiences they attributed to the story's protagonists; what type of coping strategies and emotional release strategies they would chose to address bullying; and, what type of ending they would select as the anticipated conclusion to the story. The final stage of the interview required the presentation of the four story outcomes: (a) optimistic end; (b) pessimistic end; (c) peer social support end; and (d) adult social support end, which were displayed in a randomized order to control for order of presentation effects. The full interview schedule is presented in Appendix O (p. 509).

#### *5.5.7 Focus Group Discussions*

Focus group discussions were conducted during lesson time in March 2004, each lasting approximately one hour. Following negotiation with individual groups, some of the discussions extended into participants' playtime and lunchtime. With the agreement of all participants, audio tape recordings were collected for later transcription. At St Nicholas School, all focus group discussions were conducted in a small room that had been converted from the nun's laundry room and recently



refurbished. At Westcott School, all focus group discussions were conducted in the school resource room.

Despite successfully using mixed-gender focus groups in the exploratory study, as recommended by Hennessy and Heary (2005) when participants know each other well, given the sensitive nature of the topic under discussion it was deemed appropriate to use single-sex groups for Study 2. While Greenbaum (1987, cited in Hill et al., 1996) advocates an optimum group size of five to six participants, in practice focus group discussions comprised 4-6 participants each as negotiating access with participants required flexibility. The class teachers allocated the participants to each focus group discussion. At St Nicholas School, participants were collected from their classroom by myself and escorted to the converted nun's laundry room; at Westcott School, the class teacher directed participants to the resource room at the allotted time.

The participants were seated on chairs around a circular table. Each focus group discussion began with introductions followed by instructions to explain the general nature of the focus group discussion, confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw (see Appendix Q, p. 517). Prior to data collection, children were invited to each complete two copies of the Consent Form, one for their records and one for the researcher. Data were collected in the form of flipchart outputs for later transcription.

Following completion of the Consent Forms, I opened the focus group discussions with the question "Do you remember what we looked at in the interviews? Can you

remember what the story was about?”. Subsequent discussion focused on the bullying of the new boy or girl by the group of bullies while I laid out four of the vignettes (social exclusion, teasing, group physical attack and blackmail) on the table. To explore children’s understanding of the role of the social group context in which bullying takes place, participants were first asked to identify each character with a role name, and write each name on a piece of flipchart paper. Participants were then invited to brainstorm a list of qualities, features and characteristics for each of their named characters in response to the prompt “What I want to find out from you today is a little bit more about the group of bullies, because they’re not all the same are they? They’re all playing a different part, so I want to find out from you what parts you think these three boys/girls are playing in the bullying. What are the differences between them and what are they each doing?”. Participants were requested to individually write each single idea on a coloured Post-It note and place it on the flipchart. Discussion between participants about their individual ideas was encouraged to generate further ideas for adding to the flipchart.

#### *5.5.8 Debriefing*

At the end of each interview and focus group discussion, participants were offered the opportunity to discuss their experience to ensure their understanding of the research. If they felt that participating had disturbed them in any way, participants were also reminded about the additional support listed at the end of the Participant Information Leaflet should they require to discuss their experiences with a third party. Participants each received a “well done” sticker and a certificate of participation (see Appendix R, p. 519, for an example). In addition, at the end of the

interview participants also received a ChildLine (n.d., b) information sheet entitled *Bullying: Information for primary school pupils*.

At the end of the programme of research, as a means of addressing reward and ending issues (Harker, 2002), participants each received a “well done” sticker and a thank you pack consisting of a letter, a certificate of participation (see Appendix R, p. 519, for an example), a £5 gift voucher and a copy of *How pupils cope with bullying: Successful and unsuccessful strategies* (Talamelli & Cowie, 2001).

### 5.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were considered as described in Chapter 3, Section 3.6 (p. 105).

### 5.7 Approach to Data Analysis

#### 5.7.1 Transcription

In consideration of the points raised in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.5 (pp. 88), audio tape recordings of the interview data were transcribed verbatim, including the ‘ums’ and the ‘ahs’, to preserve the diversity of children’s voices (Standing, 1998). Two interviews were excluded from the analysis due to poor sound quality. Transcripts were assigned a numerical/alphabetical code to protect the identity of the participant.

For the focus group discussions, raw data in the form of flipchart outputs were transcribed verbatim to preserve participants’ written words. To protect the identity of the participants, transcripts were assigned a numerical/alphabetical code. Due to poor sound quality (e.g., loud noises caused by participant movement during the activity) focus group discussions were not transcribed.



### *5.7.2 Analysis of the Interview Transcripts*

Following transcription, to enhance familiarity and understanding of the data, each transcript was re-read several times prior to analysis (Roberts, 1999). Despite my theoretical position outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.5 (p. 88), I made an attempt to analyse the data using the coding scheme developed by Almeida et al. (2001) which offered a quantitative format using SPSS. The coding scheme had been constructed by Almeida et al. (2001) on the basis of a review of coding categories drawn from the theoretical and empirical literature combined with content analysis of some of the participants' responses in their pilot study. However, during the implementation of this method of analysis, I grew increasingly dissatisfied with the process of fitting participants' responses into pre-existing categories. I was more interested in children's perceptions and constructions of bullying in school rather than quantifying, for example, "the number of children who said..." (Parr, 1998). I felt that I was losing much of the complexity and diversity of how children understood, constructed and experienced bullying at school (Mauthner, 1999). Since I felt that the voices of the participants were becoming constrained by the pre-defined categories, I rejected the coding scheme in favour of an approach that emphasized meaning rather than quantification.

Accordingly, I carried out an analysis of the interview transcripts using the qualitative approach to content analysis which I had successfully employed for the analysis of the focus group data in the exploratory study (Chapter 4, Section 4.3, p. 118). Not only did I envisage that this approach to data analysis would offer me the opportunity to focus on meaning rather than on quantification (Millward, 2000), in addition, I anticipated that it was "capable of classifications and descriptions which

[would] conform far more closely to the texts than those commonly produced by quantitative analysis” (Kracauer, 1952, p. 640). Furthermore, I perceived that a qualitative content analysis offered me the opportunity to listen to the words of the children’s accounts, which, in turn, would provide me with knowledge and understanding about bullying in primary school from their perspectives (Berg, 2004).

In the present study, a coding system was derived from the interview schedule with additional conceptual codes arising from a closer inspection of each interview transcript (Millward, 2000). Tables were developed in Word to tabulate master codes, categories and themes extracted from the interview transcripts. As with the exploratory study, the process of data analysis became one of cycling backwards and forwards between the Word tables and the interview transcripts in order to continually check and question emergent themes. Specifically, a reverse process ensued which involved scrutinizing the transcripts in order to obtain supportive evidence and identify direct quotations from the transcripts that would support the emergent themes (Priest et al., 2002). Previously coded data were revisited periodically to check the stability of the coding over time (Cavanagh, 1997; Roberts, 1999).

At the same time, I was developing an interest in the voice-centred relational method, originally developed to listen to the experiences of adolescent girls by Gilligan and colleagues at the Harvard Project on Women’s Psychology and Girls’ Development at The Harvard Graduate School of Education (e.g., Brown et al., 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Brown et al., 1989). Adaptations of it have also been used to listen to other groups of participants whose voices until recently have rarely been heard, for

example, young children (Rogers, 2005), urban adolescent boys (Way, 1997), older women with dementia (Proctor, 2001) and lesbian women (Proctor, 1994).

Mauthner & Doucet (2003) offer a constructive summary:

...the voice-centred method...holds at its core the idea of a relational ontology in which conceptions of the separate, self-sufficient, independent, rational 'self' or 'individual' are rejected in favour of notions of 'selves-in-relation' or 'relational beings'. Human beings are viewed as interdependent rather than independent and as embedded in a complex web of intimate and larger social relations. (p. 422)

I, therefore, decided to adapt the voice-centred relational method to concentrate on a more detailed analysis of six participant interviews to capture the richness and complexity of what the children were telling me with regard to their understanding of interpersonal relationships, peer processes and involvement in bullying. Informed by particular theoretical and conceptual assumptions about moral conflict, moral reasoning and the experience of self in relation to others, in adapting this approach, I was able to focus on the ways in which children understand and construct school bullying and their means of negotiating interpersonal conflict (Brown et al., 1989). Furthermore, with its emphasis on human relationships, the voice-centred relational method was attractive as it recognized the importance of the social context in which bullying takes place and provided me with the basis for thinking about bullying in school as a relational issue. As Brown et al. (1989) acknowledge, very few individuals experience moral conflict in a vacuum, rather people function in an



ongoing context of relationships. Moreover, in seeking to engage children as competent and articulate participants I considered the voice-centred relational approach offered me the opportunity to address some of the issues with regard to representation as outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.5 (p. 88).

The voice-centred relational method “takes as its starting point the premise that a person, represented in an interview text by a speaking voice telling a...story, experiences relationships both in terms of attachment and in terms of equality” (Brown et al, 1989, p. 148). Thus, according to this approach, how a child articulates the issue of bullying in school can be distinguished between two relational perspectives or moral orientations, that is, a *care* perspective and a *justice* perspective:

The distinction between justice and care as different moral voices and relational perspectives is empirically based, following from the observation that when people shift the focus of their attention from concerns about justice to concerns about care, their definition about what constitutes a moral problem changes; and, consequently, a situation may be seen in a different way...A justice perspective draws attention to the problems of inequality and oppression by holding up an ideal of reciprocity and equal respect between persons. A care perspective draws attention to problems of attachment and abandonment by holding up an ideal of attention and responsiveness in relationships. (Brown et al., 1989, p. 142).

Thus, the distinction between justice and care as relational perspectives or moral voices relates to the ways in which individuals understand and experience moral conflict in their relationships and their means of negotiating it. This study, therefore, applied the concept of different relational perspectives to the accounts of bullying in school described by the participants in response to the hypothetical story presented in the vignettes.

The method revolved around a set of four readings of the interview transcript, in most cases while simultaneously listening to the audio tape recording. In taking as its starting point the premise that a participant, appearing in an interview text as a speaking voice relaying their account, experiences relationships both in terms of attachment and in terms of equality, each reading considered the participant's account from a different perspective. My focus was on how children account for bullying in school in terms of their relationships with others, concentrating on bullying as a moral conflict in respect of concerns about care and justice (Brown et al., 1989). With each reading, I attempted to listen to a different voice:

*Reading 1: Reading for a general understanding and for my response to the account.* First, I read the transcript for a general understanding of the participant's account, identifying the main events, the protagonists and the sub-plots. I listened for recurrent images, words, metaphors, contradictions and inconsistencies in the narrative. This helped set the scene and enabled me to locate the child telling the story within their account (Brown et al., 1991). Secondly, in order to examine how and where some of my own assumptions and views, whether personal, political or theoretical, might affect my interpretation of the participant's words, or how I later

represented the participant, I read the text for my reflexive response to the account. I considered and documented the following: (a) my social position in relation to the participant (b) my emotional response to the participant; and (c) how I made theoretical interpretations of the participant's narrative. In practical terms, this involved using a worksheet technique to document the participants' words in one column and my reflections and interpretations in another.

*Reading 2: Reading for self.* The second reading focused upon the voice of the self, the 'I', represented in the story, including self in the role of victim, bully and assistant. This process focused my attention on the terms in which the participant spoke about her- or himself and highlighted those places where the participant shifted between self as 'I' and self as victim, bully and/or assistant.

*Reading 3: Reading for care.* In the third reading, I listened to how participants spoke about their experiences of bullying in school from a care perspective, that is, how they spoke about peer relationships in terms of attachment or detachment and connection or disconnection. Specifically, I focused on the vulnerability of individuals to issues of isolation, abandonment, inattentiveness, and lack of responsiveness.

*Reading 4: Reading for justice.* In the final reading, I focused upon how children spoke about bullying in school in terms from a justice perspective, that is, in terms of terms of equality, reciprocity and fairness between individuals. In particular, I focused on concerns with oppression, domination, inequality, unfairness of treatment and transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour.



The latter three readings involved a three-step process. First, I used coloured crayons to trace and underline certain statements in the transcripts that represented each reading, that is, the voices of the self (green), care (red) and justice (blue). The purpose of this visual technique was to attune myself to the voices of the participant without losing sight of the larger story and context (Brown et al., 1989). Secondly, after reading and underlining for self, care and justice voices, I completed summary worksheets, documenting participants' voices in one column and my interpretative summaries in the other.

Since time constraints meant that it was impossible to conduct four readings with every one of the transcripts, I concentrated such detailed attention on six cases the selection of which was based on a number of criteria. These included interviews that I found stimulating or challenging; interviews that seemed to illuminate the research aims; and interviews that provided a contrasting account to a previous participant (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). Each case was assigned a pseudonym to protect participant confidentiality and maintain anonymity.

In summary, the analysis of the interview data involved organizing the data in a number of different ways (transcriptions; codes; themes; readings; worksheets; case studies) in order to gain access to different dimensions of the interview transcripts. It also involved an iterative and interactive process of moving backwards and forwards among the different data organization methods (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998).

### 5.7.3 *Analysis of the Focus Group Discussions*

Following transcription, data were analyzed collectively using a condensed version of the voice-centred relational method outlined in the previous section, since the focus of the analysis was on group transcripts, rather than individual interviews. That is, the reading for the self (the terms in which an individual spoke about her- or himself and the places where the participant shifted between self as 'I' and self as victim, bully and/or assistant), was omitted. Thus, the method revolved around a set of three readings of the focus group transcripts. Taking as its starting point the premise that two moral orientations distinguish how children articulate the issue of bullying in school, each reading considered the group accounts from a different perspective. My focus was on how the two moral orientations of care and justice were represented in children's understanding of the role of the social group context in which bullying takes place. With each reading, I attempted to listen to a different voice:

*Reading 1: Reading for a general understanding.* First, I read the transcript for a general understanding of participants' representations of each member of the bully group, identifying the role names ascribed to each character, the nature of each character's role in the bullying process and understanding of each character's moral reasoning. I used the worksheet technique to document participants' words in one column and my reflections and interpretations in the other as described in Section 5.7.2 (p. 186).

*Reading 2: Reading for care.* In the second reading, I attended to how participants wrote about each member of the bully group from a care perspective. I paid attention

to issues of attachment or detachment and connection or disconnection. I focused on the perceived vulnerability of each character to issues of isolation, abandonment, inattentiveness, and lack of responsiveness.

*Reading 3: Reading for justice.* In the final reading, I focused upon how children portrayed each member of the bully group from a justice perspective. I paid attention to issues of equality, reciprocity and fairness between individuals. I focused on concerns with oppression, domination, inequality, unfairness of treatment and transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour.

The latter two readings involved a three-step process. First, I used coloured crayons to trace and underline certain statements in the transcripts that represented each reading, that is, care (red) and justice (blue). Secondly, after reading and underlining for care and justice voices, I completed summary worksheets, documenting focus group accounts in one column and my interpretative summaries in the other.

#### *5.7.4 Reflecting on Reflexivity*

A positivist approach to research argues, in the interests of objectivity, for the researcher to remain distant and neutral. For example, Coolican (1994, p. 172) states that: “The researcher’s attitudes and motives are not recognised, revealed or seen as relevant to the research process”. In contrast, childhood researchers (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.5, p. 88) have suggested that researchers need to adopt a reflexive approach with regard to their academic and personal preconceptions. Indeed, Davis (1998) states that:



Adults who wish to gain an understanding of the meaning of voices of children or wish to understand and represent children's...opinions may derive benefits from applying reflexive techniques. They may be able to understand the different aspirations of children by being reflexive about their own academic/professional and personal preconceptions. This may involve them employing the difference, or 'cultural resistance' between their culture (including their research ethics, roles and tools) and children's cultures as a means of understanding the diversity of children's lives. (p. 333)

One of the central issues, therefore, in qualitative data analysis is "how to keep the respondent's voices and perspectives alive, while at the same time recognizing the researcher's role in shaping the research process and product" (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 119). With one or two exceptions (e.g., Miles & Huberman, 1994), there are very few examples of how such issues might be operationalized within the actual research process, in particular, data analysis. On the other hand, the voice-centred relational method (Brown et al., 1989; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Brown et al., 1991) offers structured, yet flexible, guidance on how to translate such an approach into practice, highlighting the issue of reflexivity in terms of the researcher's social location in relation to the participant, and their emotional response to the participant's account. That said, this approach to reflexivity is not without its limitations. For example, with the benefit of hindsight, Mauthner and Doucet (2003) advocate an expanded notion of reflexivity, which goes beyond recognizing the social location and emotional response of the researcher, to examine issues of academic and personal biographies, as well as the institutional and interpersonal contexts within which researchers are embedded. Furthermore, they question how

researchers can know and understand what shapes their research “at the time of doing it” since a deeper understanding of the research process only develops retrospectively (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Nevertheless, despite these limitations I sought to adopt a reflexive approach to data analysis, in terms of ‘degrees of reflexivity’, recognizing that some influences were easier to identify and articulate at the time of the research while others may take time, distance and detachment (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

In view of the theoretical, methodological and ethical issues discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, I considered that this method of reflexivity afforded me a number of opportunities. First, it enabled me to focus on listening to children’s voices. Second, it allowed me to focus on how children construct bullying and aggressive behaviours in school from a relational perspective. Third, it presented me with the opportunity to consider the power differentials between myself, as adult researcher, and the child, as participant, in terms of adopting a reflexive approach which enabled me to acknowledge my role as researcher in the research process.

## CHAPTER 6

### Study 1 Results I

#### *6.1 Overview*

The overall aim of Study 1 was to engage children meaningfully as active participants in the research process in order to explore their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices. Specifically, this study had three key objectives:

- to explore children's emotional attributions and moral reasoning in relation to school bullying, and their causal understanding of the bullying relationship;
- to explore children's understanding of the role of the social group context in which school bullying takes place;
- to explore the coping strategies children consider using to address school bullying.

To achieve these objectives, as well as consideration of methodological and ethical issues in connection with access and recruitment, informed consent, and data collection methods, I sought to adopt methods of data analysis and representation that would ensure that the children's voices were heard and represented (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). Furthermore, I endeavoured to adopt methods of data analysis and representation that would respect children's rights to freedom of participation and freedom of expression (UN, 1989), and which would minimize the power differential between researcher and participant. To this end, the audio tape recordings were



transcribed verbatim (Standing, 1998), and a qualitative approach to data analysis was adopted to preserve the diversity of children's voices. Following a frustrating attempt to analyze the interview data using a coding scheme devised by Almeida, Marques et al. (2001), I proceeded to use the qualitative approach to content analysis, which I had successfully employed for the analysis of the focus group data in the exploratory study. Two tables, one for each school, were created in Word by ordering the data from the interview transcripts into eleven master codes pre-determined by the interview schedule: nature of the relationship, causal understanding of the bullying relationship general emotional attributions, moral attributions, coping strategies, and story outcomes. Subsequently, 62 categories were ascertained, also pre-determined by the interview schedule. Following a thorough exploration of the interview transcripts, a number of themes were derived from each category. Participant's actual quotations and summarizing words or phrases were selected to illustrate each of the derived themes; I removed my part in the dialogue and inserted words in brackets to augment missing information. The categories and themes are explained in detail below with a summary presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1  
*Summary of Categories and Themes*

Master codes	Categories	Themes
Nature of the relationship	Aggressive behaviours	
	Bullying	
Causal understanding of the bullying relationship	Bully-focused	Bully's emotions; bully not knowing victim; bully's past negative experience; inevitable existence of bullies; bully's previous bullying of others; bully's aggressive tendencies
	Victim-focused	Victim's newness and difference; victim's lack of knowledge of bullies; victim's previous victimization
	Peer relationship-focused	Group membership; previous argument/encounter
	School-focused	School practices
General emotional attributions to new boy/girl	Sadness	Being bullied; thwarted expectations; unfamiliarity; difference; feeling responsible for the bullying; lack of friends

*(table continues)*

Table 6.1 (continued)

Master codes	Categories	Themes
General emotional attributions to the group	Neglect	Being bullied; lack of friends; absence of support or welcome; feeling out of place
	Fear	Being bullied; thwarted expectations; consequences of reporting the bullying; the unknown
	Nervousness	Thwarted expectations; consequences of bullying; concern for personal property
	Anger	Retaliation; dislike
	Shame	Embarrassment
	Surprise	Lack of friends; thwarted expectations
	Cheerfulness	Enjoyment of bullying; lack of empathy for victim; desirable outcomes; emotional reaction of victim; bully group support
	Pride	Confidence and status; hurtful to someone else
	Shame	Regret for bullying behaviour; ambivalence towards engagement in bullying
	Anger	Aggression; dislike; ambivalence towards engagement in bullying; regret for bullying behaviour; wanting to bully

*(table continues)*



Table 6.1 (continued)

Master codes	Categories	Themes
General emotional attributions to follower	Sadness	Lack of choice
	Neglect	Indifference to bullying; desensitized to bullying
	Fear	Being caught
	Nervousness	Engagement in bullying behaviour
	Disappointment	Empathy for victim
	Surprise	Puzzlement
	Nothing	
	Cheerfulness	Enjoyment; being part of the bully group; being a follower of the group; use of power; increased status
	Shame	Regret for bullying behaviour; regret for what might have been; for being a follower of the bullies
	Nervousness	Lack of choice
	Surprise	Bullies' actions
	Anger	Retaliation
	Fear	Becoming the next victim
	Pride	Confidence; friendship with bullies
	Disappointment	Self-identity
	Neglect	Feeling left out

(table continues)

Table 6.1 (continued)

Master codes	Categories	Themes
Moral attributions - victim	Sadness	Bad behaviour; conforming with the group; behaviour of the group
	Worry	Fear of threat or harm from bullies; anticipation of future danger or harm from bullies; not knowing what to do; not feeling welcome; making the wrong impression; feeling unsafe; getting into trouble
	Shame	Actual experience of bullying behaviours; offending the bullies; feeling humiliated; appearance; choice of new school; for not defending oneself
	Pride	Non-compliance with bullies; running away; not caring; the bullies leaving
	Indifference	First day
Moral attributions – bully/bullies	Indifference	Perpetrating bullying behaviours; previous experience of bullying; feeling “big” and “cool”; finding bullying funny; thinking it’s ok to bully; not knowing what they’re doing; not knowing what it’s like to be bullied

*(table continues)*

Table 6.1 (continued)

Master codes	Categories	Themes
	Pride	Engagement in bullying the victim; for being the leader of the bully group; feeling “cool”; not caring; for smoking; feeling victorious; finding bullying funny; for not being the victim; previous experience of bullying; thinking they will not get caught
	Shame	Actual bullying behaviours; knowing bullying behaviour is wrong; unprovoked bullying; consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour
	Worry	Fear of consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour; being nasty; breaking school rules
Moral attributions – Follower	Worry	Fear of consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour; not being fully engaged in the bullying; feeling sorry for the victim; anticipation of continuation of bullying; intensity of bullying

(table continues)



Table 6.1 (continued)

Master codes	Categories	Themes
	Shame	Ambivalence regarding their participation in the bullying; not really wanting to participate; knowing bullying behaviour is wrong; as a form of protection; for being a part of the bully group; for knowing what it was like to be the victim
	Indifference	Happy, smiling attitude; indirect involvement
	Pride	Happy demeanour; engagement in bullying
Coping strategies	Seeking social support	Parents; teachers
	Directly addressing the bullies	Facing up to the bullies; asking the bullies to stop; reasoning with the bullies; telling the bullies how it felt; threatening to tell a teacher; making friends with the bullies
	Avoidance	Distancing; ignoring

*(table continues)*

Table 6.1 (continued)

Master codes	Categories	Themes
Emotional Release Strategies	Finding other friends	
	Verbal and physical retaliation	
	Cognitive-based strategies	Selective interpretation; view from a different perspective
	Seeking social support	Teachers; parents
	Avoidance	Distancing; ignoring
	Finding other friends	
	Wishful Thinking	
	Directly addressing the bullies	Standing up to the bullies; making friends with the bullies
	Nothing	
	Retaliation	
Story Outcomes	Optimistic	
	Pessimistic	
	Peer Social Support	
	Adult Social Support	

## 6.2 *Nature of the Relationship*

Whereas a minority of participants cited episodic aggressive behaviours without specifically mentioning bullying (11%), the majority of participants described the nature of the relationship depicted in the vignettes as bullying (89%). For example:

“She’s being kind of bullied ‘cos she’s not wearing the same uniform as the others...she’s being left out because she’s just different...they’re ganging up against her because she’s different and she’s the new person”. (female, St Nicholas)

“He wants to like be friends but they won’t let him ‘cos they think like he’s a geek but there’s no such thing because they’re all the same people if they wear glasses or not...he’s being bullied by that boy” (male, Westcott)

These findings confirm the adequacy of the vignettes to illustrate a peer bullying relationship, thus validating them as a stimulus to study children’s knowledge of, and reasoning about, the phenomenon (del Barrio et al., 2003; Ojala & Nesdale 2004).

## 6.3 *Causal Understanding of the Bullying Relationship.*

In response to questions about why bullying happens in school and what might cause it to happen, analysis of the interview transcripts revealed four categories in terms of the focus for explaining bullying, that is, the bully/bullies, the victim, the peer relationship and the wider school system.



### 6.3.1 *Bully-focused*

The majority of participants attributed the bully's emotions as causes of bullying, for example, jealousy, amusement, anger and feelings of superiority. One female participant at Westcott School suggested that the bullies' jealousy of the victim might be a reason for the bullying: "Because maybe I think some people, sometimes this can happen like some people bully other children because they're jealous sometimes". Specifically, another female at Westcott School proposed that jealousy of the victim's possessions was the cause of bullying. She responded, "Because like, people don't like other people and, like, they [the victim] have something special, yeah, or something, yeah, and they [the bullies] don't have it so they pick on them and like bully them...yeah, it might be that she has something special like some clothes or anything, yeah, and then they are like jealous of it so they just picking on her for no reason". One female participant at Westcott School suggested that jealousy of school achievement might be an antecedent to bullying, "Maybe... the girl that's being left out, like, does better work than them in class and they've, like, they're leaving her out because if she's better than them she's kind of she's more she works more harder than them".

Two participants at Westcott School thought that the bullies bullied other children "for fun". For example, one female pupil suggested, "Maybe it's because it's...something other children can do to other children 'cos it's something that's fun for them and not for the other person and they know how to wind that person up". Furthermore, one male pupil at St Nicholas proposed that because the bully group had previously found bullying fun, they were repeating the experience: "Well it

could have happened before or this could have been the first time...because they thought it was fun the first time so they're doing it again".

One female at Westcott School suggested it was anger that was the cause of bullying combined with the victim's low self-esteem: "Because one of the girls, yeah, they can't, they want to put all their anger on other people and you've [victim] got no self-esteem".

Furthermore, feelings of superiority and confidence on the part of the bully were cited as possible causes of bullying on a number of occasions. For example, one male pupil at Westcott School said, "...like people think they can bully other people when they feel like it and like they're the master and they're bullying them whenever they like". Another male pupil at St Nicholas suggested: "It's because them people are being horrible like they're bullies and they just want to be like all big...and be all cool, so people will be scared of them and then they could take their things". These responses hint at a perceived imbalance of power between the bully and the victim.

Participants also identified the unknown quantity of the new boy or girl, from the bullies' perspective, as a causal reason for the bullying. For example, "Because the boy is new and they don't know him very well" (male, St Nicholas) and, "Because these people [bullies] are not used to the new girls and new boys" (female, Westcott). More particularly, a female pupil at St Nicholas maintained, "Because people dress differently and they [the bullies] just don't like certain people when they're new because they don't know them". Indeed, the bullies' dislike of the new person was cited by two pupils at St Nicholas as a cause of bullying and aggressive behaviours.



For example, one girl responded, “Because they don’t really like the new girl that’s just come in”. One female participant proposed that the bullies might be engaging in bullying behaviour as a defence against the unknown person. She said, “Because she’s new and they might feel put off because she’s new so they think that the only way is to bully her, but that’s not right because if somebody’s new you should try and be their friend” (female, St Nicholas). This participant also offered an alternative to bullying the new girl that is, befriending her.

The bully group’s past negative experiences was also commonly cited as a reason for these kinds of things happening in school. For example, one male participant at St Nicholas said, “They’ve got something wrong in their life and they’re taking it out on other people”. Indeed, one male participant at Westcott School’s response hinted at retaliation: “Because the bullies never had a good life that’s why they bully someone else...so they can make life worse for them [the new boy]”. Specifically, a few participants from Westcott School suggested that the antecedent was neglect by parents or caregivers early in the bully’s life. For example, one female proposed: “Maybe something happened to her when they were like young children or something, when they were little or a baby...”, and one male suggested that it was “...’Cos the children that bully might be being abused at home”. Moreover, a number of participants suggested that the bullies themselves had experienced bullying which in turn caused them to bully. For example, one male at St Nicholas School suggested that, “The boys that are bullying the other boy have been bullied themselves [sic]”. Furthermore, a female participant at St Nicholas proposed, “People might have been bullied themselves before they started...and they might



want to get back but then they think well the bullies might have felt quite good about doing that to me so I should maybe do it to somebody”.

A minority of participants, particularly males, attributed the cause of bullying and aggressive behaviours to the inevitable existence of bullies. For example, one female participant at Westcott hinted at the commonplace existence of bullies in school: “They might be like normal class bullies...” and another from St Nicholas said, “I think they’re kind of the bully people”. Furthermore, one male pupil at Westcott School said, “...‘cos some people are bullies and they just do it to be horrible”; while a female pupil at St Nicholas School stated, “...there’s some really, really nasty people in school and they don’t like other kids”.

A number of participants cited previous engagement in bullying others as a possible causal explanation for school bullying. Several participants suggested that this was what the group of bullies did to all the new children. For example, one male pupil at St Nicholas School responded: “They might do this to all of the people that come to this school, like new boys”. Furthermore, one female participant from Westcott School proposed: “She might of, they might of like teased someone else before and they might have, their teacher might have told them that there was a new person coming to the school and then they might of like wanted to...they might have like wanted to tease her” hinting at pre-meditation.

Furthermore, a number of participants explained bullying and aggressive behaviour in school in terms of the bullies’ aggressive tendencies. For example, one male pupil at Westcott School said, “...because they don’t want anyone else to play with him

they just wanna beat him up”, a response which also alluded to bullying as a form of social control. Another participant suggested that the bullies were indiscriminate in their choice of victim, “They pick on anybody” (male, St Nicholas), whereas another suggested the bullies were unrestrained, “Because some people just don’t know when to stop” (male, Westcott).

### 6.3.2 *Victim-focused*

In terms of the new boy or girl, generally the focus was on their unfamiliarity that is, their newness and/or their difference, was cited as a reason why bullying and aggressive behaviours might happen in school. For example, one male pupil from Westcott School suggested, “’cos the boy’s new they think he’s different...’cos he’s kind of different to all the other children, wearing shorts, so they’re taking the mickey out of him”.

While the hypothetical story explicitly illustrated that the new boy or girl is wearing a different uniform, some children’s responses went beyond the immediately observable. For example, one male pupil at St Nicholas suggested, “Because someone’s different or someone might wear glasses or something...” and a female pupil at St Nicholas said, “Well, because she’s wearing different clothes and she might not be wearing the most fashionable shoes or the right sort of hairstyle or something”. One male pupil at Westcott School elaborated on the newness of the new boy, stating, “Probably because he’s by himself he might, he doesn’t have no friends he’s new to the school he’s not wearing school uniform that’s why they might be, they’re teasing him, they’re threatening him, they think that he’s smaller than them”. This response hints at the protective quality of friendships in school.



Although less frequently mentioned, the analysis highlighted other perceived differences between the new boy or girl and the bully group. For example, one female pupil at St Nicholas suggested that ethnic or cultural differences might cause bullying behaviour, “Just ‘cos they’re different in some way or don’t talk the same, different skin colour, something like that”. Another hinted at children being victimized as a result of their special educational needs, “Cos if someone isn’t like normal then some people might think it’s funny and they keep teasing them and doing stupid things” (female, St Nicholas).

On the other hand, some participants suggested that the new boy or girl’s unawareness of the existence of the bullies was a reason for the bullying, “...because the new people don’t know about the bullies and stuff” (female, Westcott).

Specifically, a female pupil at Westcott’s response suggested that the new girl’s unawareness of the bullies’ existence would influence her coping strategy, which would, in turn, impact on the bullies’ feelings of confidence. She claimed, “Because like she can’t really, she’s new and so they think...that she’s not going to do anything and like she’s new and she wouldn’t say anything to them because she doesn’t really know them so like they act all cool and stuff”. Furthermore, a male pupil at Westcott stated “People think we [sic] can and they know that he ain’t gonna tell...that’s why bullies get better and better...it’s because he’s new at school and don’t know them”.

This response hints at the new boy’s lack of knowledge of the social structure of the peer group and the impact this has on the confidence of the bully group in terms of their perceiving an absence of repercussions.



Conversely, a number of participants at St Nicholas School suggested that a cause of bullying and aggressive behaviours was due to perceived victimization of the new boy or girl at their old school. For example, one female suggested, “For the girl joining the new school she might have been bullied in her old school as well; and one male stated, “Well he might have moved from an old school where he got bullied”. Furthermore, several pupils explicitly suggested that the new boy or girl had moved schools because they had been bullied at their previous school. For example, “Maybe in his old school maybe there were the other bullies so he moved houses so he...went to this new school” (male, St Nicholas).

### *6.3.3 Peer Relationship-focused*

Group membership in terms of either belonging, or not belonging, to the group was cited as an explanation for the occurrence of bullying and aggressive behaviours in school. For example, one female pupil at St Nicholas reported that it was, “Because sometimes, well not everybody’s the same and because she’s new she’s wearing different uniform and the other girls have been together for all the time in their school and she’s just one of the girls that’s been left out”. Another female pupil at St Nicholas hinted at an “in” group and an “out” group, “Cos people are really different because maybe sometimes people just don’t like them or they don’t fit in or they don’t think they’re right to be part of the popular group and they just put them into this group that’s geeky...”. More explicitly, one female participant at Westcott School proposed that the victim had been a member of the bully group and had since been excluded stating, “Well she [the new girl] might of, just like maybe she was with that gang and then someone who’s in that gang came, and then they chucked her out...”. Furthermore, a male pupil at Westcott School indicated that membership of

the bully group offered support and protection thus enabling engagement in bullying, “It’s because they’re in a big, if they’re in like a group of like friends they think they think if they bully someone around they think that that person won’t retaliate like hit them or something”.

An acrimonious encounter or a previous argument was cited in a number of cases as possible antecedents to the bullying. For example, one female participant at Westcott School suggested, “Because of an argument or maybe...she’s done something in the past”. Another female participant at St Nicholas suggested that the girls had had an earlier argument that had continued into school time, “The [new] girl who’s started went to someone’s house and they had a [sic] argument and then they went back to school and they still had a [sic] argument”. Furthermore, a number of participants at Westcott School suggested that revenge was a motive since the victim had previously bullied members of the bully group. For example, one male participant said, “He could’ve like bullied all of them...and then they come back and get revenge”. A female participant at Westcott School offered an elaborate explanation. She stated, “She might have had a gang with her before and then they left her and...now she was being rude to them girls and they didn’t have a gang then and then now the gang left her and then now they’re getting revenge to her ‘cos of what she did to them”.

On the other hand, two participants at Westcott School held that the provocation had been unintentional. For example, one male pupil stated, “That he’s accidentally done something and they started bullying him”. While one female pupil said, “Probably



that the girl who's getting bullied, yeah, might have done something by accident, yeah, and the other person's getting all her friends, yeah, to bully her".

#### *6.3.4 School-focused*

One female pupil at St Nicholas suggested that bullying was due to the school context, that is, management practices, "Because of no supervision".

### *6.4 General Emotional Attributions*

In respect of questions relating to general emotional attributions, participants' emotion words were coded based upon the emotion clusters identified by Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O'Connor (2001) (see Table 6.2).

#### *6.4.1 General Emotional Attributions to the New Boy/Girl and Self in the Role of New Boy/Girl*

##### *6.4.1.1 Sadness.*

Sadness was commonly attributed to the new boy or new girl with aspects of being bullied cited as the main reason for the attribution. For example, one female pupil at Westcott School replied, "Because everywhere she goes like she sees the girls there and they're always picking on her and telling her to do things she doesn't want to do". Less commonly mentioned reasons included: thwarted expectations ("Because it's her second school she expects it to be good, but people are bullying her again and so she feels upset that this has happened in her new school"); unfamiliarity with the new school; the new pupil's different appearance; and the victim feeling personally responsible for the occurrence of the bullying ("Because she wishes she wouldn't have done something wrong to that person who's bullying her").



Table 6.2

*Participants' Emotion Words.*

Emotion	Participants' emotion words
Anger	Aggressive, angry, cross, deceived, dislike, disruptive, mad, mean, menacing, revengeful, shocked, take it out
Cheerfulness	Amused, enjoyment, fun, funny, glad, good, happy, laughing, like, pleased, satisfied, smirks
Disappointment	Disappointed
Fear	Frightened, scared, tense
Neglect	Alone, left out, lonely, misfit, not welcome, outsider, small, uncaring, unwanted
Nervousness	Nervous, panicky, shy, suspicious, worried
Pride	Advantage, big, confident, cool, important, lucky, power, proud, smart, strong, won
Sadness	Hurt, sad, unhappy, upset
Shame	Ashamed, bad, embarrassed, guilty, horrible, not good, not nice, regretful, silly, sorry
Surprise	Frowning, questioning, shock, surprise

A number of participants at Westcott School suggested that feeling sad might discourage the new boy or girl from attending school. For example, a female pupil suggested, “I think she’s feeling small inside and really sad that she couldn’t make friends and people were bullying her so I don’t think she would’ve wanted to go to school the next day”. A male pupil proposed that sadness would make the new boy feel powerless: “Because he’s getting the mick taken out of him and can’t do nothing...”.

More often, sadness was attributed to the self in the role of new boy or girl with the experience of being bullied and a lack of friends cited as the main reasons for the attribution. Indeed, one female pupil at St Nicholas School suggested that a lack of friends was because of being bullied stating, “Because they’re kind of stopping you from having friends because if you’re the new girl and you’re being pushed around then no-one really wants to play with you because you might get pushed around”. A less commonly cited reason for the attribution of sadness to self as victim was the notion that children at the new school had not met the new boy or girl’s expectations in terms of offering friendship. For example, one girl at Westcott School said that she would feel “Upset...because I would have thought that they were my friends and after a little while they would have started being rude to me and stuff”.

#### *6.4.1.2 Neglect.*

Neglect was also commonly attributed to the new boy or girl with aspects of being bullied cited as the most common reason. For example, one male pupil at St Nicholas School reasoned: “Left out and sad...because the other kids don’t want to play with him and they keep on pushing him around”. A number of responses

suggested that lack of friends was why the new boy or girl was feeling neglected. For example, a male participant at Westcott School suggested, “Like he’s feeling very small...and like he’s feeling all lonely and he’s got no friends...because like there’s a gang of friends and they’re like being horrible to him because they know that he’s new and he hasn’t got any friends”. This response also hinted at lack of friends as a perceived cause of bullying.

Furthermore, a number of participants mentioned the absence of support or welcome for the new pupil as a reason for attributing neglect. One girl at Westcott School said: “She’s feeling upset and, like, alone and like no-one’s supporting her or anything...because she hasn’t got any friends and the children are just being rude to her and stuff like that when they should be taking her around and they should be being her friend”. One male participant from St Nicholas School attributed neglect in terms of feeling out of place: “Well I think that he might feel that he doesn’t fit in and he doesn’t like them and if he tells someone they probably won’t believe him and they’re just being really mean”. There were gender differences in the attribution of neglect at Westcott School with more females than males citing this emotion.

While neglect was less commonly attributed to self in the role of new boy or girl, aspects of being bullied and lack of friends were cited as reasons for the attribution. For example, one male pupil at St Nicholas School responded that he would feel “Upset and left out...’cos they’re pushing me around and they’re not letting me play with them”. A girl at Westcott School suggested that she would feel unsupported: “Um, I’d feel lonely and I haven’t got no-one to turn to”. One male pupil at Westcott School replied, laughing, “I’d feel lonely, but I probably wouldn’t be in this situation



myself...because I've got loads of friends in my class". This boy's response highlights his belief that friendships acted as a protective factor against victimization.

#### *6.4.1.3 Fear.*

Fear was sometimes attributed to the new boy or girl with aspects of being bullied cited as one of the main reasons for the attribution. For example, one male pupil at St Nicholas said the new boy felt "Scared and unhappy...because they're like torturing him, hurting him and if he took the cigarette he might die". A female pupil at St Nicholas School hinted at concern for the continuation of the bullying in terms of the consequences of reporting it: "She doesn't want to tell anyone because she's too scared that they might tell them off and then they bully her more". A handful of participants expressed concern for not knowing what else might happen. For example, one female pupil at Westcott School stated that the new girl might be feeling "Quite probably tense inside and scared and worried about what might happen through the day...". A male participant at Westcott School thought, "He might be frightened because he don't know at any stage if they're gonna hit him really hard or threaten him or take his bat or something off him".

In contrast, while fear was attributed less often to self in the role of new boy or girl, the reasons cited included fear of the bullying behaviour and fear "like I didn't want to be in that school, I wanted to be in a different school" (female, St Nicholas).

#### *6.4.1.4 Nervousness.*

Although nervousness was seldom attributed to the new boy or girl, one male participant at Westcott School offered a comprehensive explanation for attributing

this emotion in terms of expectations of new classmates. He said “I think he’s, when he comes to school and looks at some children and thinks they look alright and they could be his friends, but then he’s trying to be friends and then they’re not gonna be friends with him, so they’re going to bully him until he’s sort of worried about them and he walks away”. Furthermore, a female at St Nicholas school attributed worry to the new girl in terms of the fear of the consequences of addressing the bullying:

“She might be worried that she’s run into them and stuff and gonna be horrible to her and she might get in trouble for like her books being torn something like that. It’s her first day, she doesn’t really know the teacher and stuff like that and the teacher might not believe her if she said the other children did that”.

Similarly, nervousness was seldom attributed to self as victim. One boy from St Nicholas School responded in terms of fear for his property: “Um, really panicky and nervous and scared that he won’t get his books, scared that I won’t get my books back”. A couple of responses highlighted feeling nervous about starting a new school. For example, a boy from Westcott School stated that he “Might be nervous about going to school...because I’ve never been to that school and I don’t know how the people are like, or anything like that”. Another male pupil from Westcott School reasoned: “I’d feel quite worried and I’d try and make friends straight away so I feel, um, sort of, make myself at home, settled at the school”. Again, this participant’s response strategy hints at the perception that friendship acts as a protective factor against bullying.

#### 6.4.1.5 *Anger.*

Anger was rarely attributed to the new boy or girl. One male participant at Westcott School framed his response in terms of this character wanting to retaliate but feeling out-numbered, “Angry ‘cos he wants to do something but there’s three of them and one of him”. A female participant at St Nicholas School attributed anger in terms of dislike of the school “Um she doesn’t like the school ‘cos she’s getting like pushed around”.

Anger was more often attributed to self as victim. One female participant at St Nicholas School worded her reply in terms of feeling angry in response to damage to her belongings: “I’d feel angry...’cos she’s just like messing around with her stuff and ruining something precious”. A male pupil from Westcott School explained that he would want to retaliate saying that he would feel “Angry all the way, like, stop it, step on them, like make them and all that scared ‘cos like last time I went to a new school and all that there was bullies and I got fed up with them. I’ll get angry with them”.

#### 6.4.1.6 *Shame.*

Shame was less commonly attributed to the new boy or girl, with embarrassment due to appearance cited as the reason for the attribution. For example, a male pupil at Westcott School suggested that the new boy felt: “Um, embarrassed and don’t like going to school...‘cos they’re taking the mickey out of him and he’s wearing shorts and them lot are wearing trousers”.



In addition, shame was less commonly attributed to self in the role of new boy or girl. One female pupil from Westcott School responded: “I would feel quite sad and I would feel ashamed...because nobody’s being my friend and I’m just standing there in the middle and nobody to talk to” and a male participant from the same school supposed that he would feel ashamed for his choice of new school.

#### *6.4.1.7 Surprise.*

On the odd occasion when surprise was attributed to the new boy or girl, reasons cited were this character’s lack of friends and expectations of new classmates not being realized. For example, one pupil at St Nicholas suggested that the new boy felt “Really like shocked that he doesn’t have any friends”. Furthermore, a male participant at Westcott School comprehensively explained that the new boy, who was not expecting such behaviour, was “Feeling kind of deceived that the school makes some kind of...like doing stuff to him he’s not doing nothing to them ‘cos he’s wearing a different school uniform and he’s just so different from them...Because like school mates are not meant not even school mates like people in your class or people in the whole school shouldn’t do nothing like that because like if you did it back to them they wouldn’t like it”. This comment also highlights the expectation that peers should be kind and supportive to one another.

Surprise was not attributed to self in the role of victim.

### *6.4.2 General Emotional Attributions to the Bully/bullies and Self in the Role of Bully*

#### *6.4.2.1 Cheerfulness.*

Cheerfulness was frequently attributed to the group of bullies, most commonly in terms of this character's enjoyment of bullying the new boy or girl. For example, one male participant at Westcott School said the bullies were feeling "Happy and they're having fun 'cos they like bullying". A male participant from St Nicholas School said "Laughing and happy that they're you know [doing it], yeah, and they're laughing at him". Two male pupils' responses suggested that bullies could enjoy bullying due to lack of empathy. For example, one boy at Westcott School said "I think they're feeling 'ha ha look at him he's fell over'...because they're bullies and they don't care what, like, what happens to other people". Another boy from St Nicholas school proposed, "They'd be thinking it's funny...'cos of the way they are...they think that he's not going to get hurt".

In addition, cheerfulness was attributed to the bullies in terms of desirable outcomes for the bully relating to social achievements, such as increased status or confidence, or achievement of a goal, such as, the new person leaving. For example, one female pupil at Westcott School suggested "She's feeling very happy with herself because she's like feeling like I'm, oh, bullying her and I'm popular 'cos I'm bullying her". Another female at St Nicholas School proposed that the bully was "Probably feeling good about herself 'cos she thinks 'ooh look at me I can make this person scared just by taking their book out of their bag and throwing it around the place'" suggesting feelings of superiority. Support from the group was also cited as a reason for feeling cheerful, for example, a male participant from Westcott School suggested that "I

think he's, like, he's happy that he's done it, I think...because he's in the group of them and they all hate him". A number of responses indicated that the bully felt cheerful in terms of a sense of achievement, that is, the new boy or girl would leave because of the bullying. For example, a male pupil at Westcott School stated, "He feels good because...he might feel good because he don't like him, he wants him to leave the school".

A number of participants framed their responses in terms of the emotional reaction of the victim. For example, a female from Westcott School held that "They're feeling happy and joyful 'cos they're bullying her and they can see that she's getting upset". One male participant at St Nicholas School cited pleasure in terms of disempowerment of the victim saying the bully would feel "Pleased...because he [new boy] can't do anything about it".

In contrast, cheerfulness was attributed to self in the role of bully infrequently. One male participant at Westcott School said, "If I was like them boys I would probably feel like it was fun". One female pupil at St Nicholas School attributed cheerfulness to the bullies in terms of the support of friendship from other members of the group, while another suggested, "I would be happy...because I think it's the right thing to do". While another was unsure, she reported, "It could be something that's happened before so she might be feeling glad", suggesting that avenging a previous wrongdoing has made her feel cheerful.



#### 6.4.2.2 *Pride.*

Pride was often attributed to the bullies in terms of perceived increase in confidence and status. Whereas participants at Westcott School framed their responses in terms of this character feeling “big”, “cool” or “heavy”, participants at St Nicholas School attributed optimism to the bullies in terms of “advantage”, “power”, “importance” and “winning”. For example, a female participant at St Nicholas School said: “She’s feeling kind of like she’s got an advantage and she just wants to like be the best...she has an advantage and she’s just taking it and she’s just chucking all the stuff over the floor”. In response to the same vignette, another female participant from the same school stated: “She thinks she’s all big because she’s got her [new girl] things and she...went through her bag and that’s a bit rude”. One girl from Westcott School framed her response in terms of the bullies feeling proud for being hurtful to someone else stating, “Um, they might feel proud of themselves because they’re making someone else feel bad”.

While pride was rarely attributed to self in the role of bully, responses were in terms of perceived increase in confidence and status. For example, a female pupil at Westcott School stated that she would feel “Really big and like cool” and a male pupil from the same school said: “I’d be feeling, oh yeah, yeah I’m doing this ‘cos I’m all cool and I’m gonna threaten that boy over there”.

#### 6.4.2.3 *Shame.*

Although shame was less commonly attributed to the bullies, it was more usually cited by female participants. Reasons for the attribution included this character feeling regret for what they had done. For example, one female participant at St

Nicholas School stated that the bullies would feel “Sort of in a way guilty...because they know they shouldn’t be doing that and they know she [new girl] probably feels quite bad”.

A number of responses in this category suggested that participants thought that some of the bullies felt ambivalent about engaging in bullying. For example, a female participant at Westcott School proposed, “She might be feeling *sorry* for the new girl...because the other girls they’re like, she might be feeling sorry and like the other girls they’re just being mean and stuff like that and she’s just, I think she might be feeling sorry, like when she’s giving her the cigarette she’s sorry, but then she’s like, she’s trying to be with her friend and being horrible as well”. This response suggested that one of the bully characters was feeling regretful on the one hand, but wanting to be part of the group on the other. Similarly, another female participant at Westcott School stated: “I think she’s [tall girl] feeling like um she doesn’t want this to happen but...like she’s not in the real group but, there’s like two that, the other two are making her do... so she’s feeling bad about what she’s doing with her friends”. In terms of peer group dynamics, these responses allude to the participant role of assistant and the possible motivations for assuming such a role.

Shame was more frequently attributed to self in the role of bully. Several responses were framed in terms of this character feeling regret after the event. For example, one boy at St Nicholas school held: “After I’d done it I’d feel ashamed...because I had just been bullying a boy who hadn’t done anything to me”. A girl at the same school claimed: “I would feel really horrible because I would be bullying someone that’s new and who has just come into the school”. A response from a girl at



Westcott School, in terms of self as bully, suggested regret for what might have been in terms of future friendship. She said, “Kind of like for pushing her over I’d wished I never of done it... ‘cos she’s like, they don’t really know her, she might have been just like her, so she might have been her friend”.

#### *6.4.2.4 Anger.*

Anger was attributed to the group of bullies on a few occasions. One male participant from St Nicholas School suggested that aggression was the sole reason for the bully’s anger: “I think he’s feeling like [he wants to] hit him or something...probably mad... ‘cos they’re taking all his school bags out and throwing all his school books out and throwing them everywhere”. Another suggested that dislike of the new boy was the reason for the bully’s anger: “Probably disruptive and aggressive and he just wants to tease someone and doesn’t like the [new] boy”. A female participant from St Nicholas School proposed an antecedent to the feeling of anger stating: “They might be feeling cross ‘cos bullies only bully if something is happening to them and they feel that they have to take it out on somebody else”. For some of the group, ambivalence towards engagement in bullying the new pupil, in terms of motivation, was expressed as a reason for the attribution of anger. For example, one male pupil at Westcott School said, “I think he’s feeling, by the expression on his face, I think he’s, when they tripped him over and he looks a bit angry...well, they might have done, he might sort of be...friends with them, but he has to do it because he wants to be friends with them”. This response suggested that the goal of engagement in bullying others was to remain friends with the bullies.



Anger was more commonly attributed to self in the role of bully. Several participants' responses suggested that their anger was a response to engaging in bullying. For example, one female participant from St Nicholas School held: "As soon as I had, if I had realized what I had done I would be really mad at myself because I'd done something really wrong". A male participant at Westcott School replied, "I'd feel like...if I was him [the tall one] I'd feel like *angry* with myself...because like I'm bullying someone and I've actually got the cigarette in my hand...". Whereas, other participants suggested that would engage in bullying because they felt angry. One male participant from St Nicholas School stated, "I would feel really kind of menacing, just be looking for a fight...hit someone for the sake of it" suggesting a predisposition to anger. A female pupil from the same school stated "I'd probably feel angry because, like, with myself but I wouldn't be able to stop".

#### 6.4.2.5 *Sadness.*

Although rarely attributed to the group of bullies, when it was, sadness was attributed primarily in terms of perceived lack of choice about bullying the new girl. For example, one participant at Westcott School explained, "They might be feeling sad inside because like one of them might not wanna do it and there might be the boss of the group like telling them to like tease her", alluding to the social context in which bullying takes place.

More often, sadness was attributed to self in the role of bully, again, mostly in terms of the perceived lack of choice about engagement in bullying, and mostly by participants at Westcott School. For example, one boy stated, "I'd sort of feel, if I

was that big one and I had just, because I'm friends [with the bully] I had to bully someone I'd feel sad for the person...". A number of participants expressed the attribution of sadness in terms of empathy for the victim. One girl said: "I don't think I'd be happy with bullying someone else...Because I know how it feels", indicating that she herself had been the victim of bullying. A male pupil stated, "I would feel kind of upset for what I've done and I'd try and make it back up to him... because, like, I would think if...he did that to me would I like it and I would say no".

#### *6.4.2.6 Neglect.*

On a number of occasions, participants at St Nicholas School attributed neglect to the group of bullies in terms of feeling indifferent towards the victim. For example, a male pupil said of the bullies: "Oh, they're feeling fine...fine because they don't care about the new boy, they only care about themselves". A female pupil's response suggested that the bullies were desensitized to the effects of the bullying: "They don't mind, they're just going to bully her...yeah, they don't care, do they? Because they don't care about her... 'cos they've probably bullied someone else before".

Neglect was not attributed to self in the role of bully.

#### *6.4.2.7 Fear.*

Fear was rarely attributed to either the bullies or self in the role of bully. On one occasion, a female pupil from Westcott School suggested that the tall bully might feel fear in terms of the consequences of being caught saying, "Scared she [tall girl] might get told off or something...and the teacher might come walking passed...um,

‘cos she might...her parents might know about it”. Similarly, in terms of self in the role of bully, she laughingly stated, “I’d feel kind of scared that I’d get told off because my parents would really tell me off”.

#### *6.4.2.8 Nervousness.*

On one occasion, nervousness was attributed to the bullies for carrying out the bullying: “She’s feeling sort of, she wants to show off to her friends, like teasing the girl, so she’s just a bit worried”. She also said of herself as bully, laughing: “I’d be worried if the new girl told the teacher but obviously that doesn’t really happen ‘cos if I was like one of them three we’d be probably the top of the school if they’re in Year 6 we’d think that we’re the best obviously”. This response suggests that the participant perceived her position within the school structure as a protective factor against the consequences of bullying.

#### *6.4.2.9 Disappointment.*

While disappointment was not attributed to the bullies, this emotion was attributed to self in the role of bully by one male participant from Westcott School who said, “I would feel disappointed with myself...because like they’re making someone feel so bad” suggesting empathy with the victim.

#### *6.4.2.10 Surprise.*

Surprise was attributed to the bullies on one occasion. One male participant from Westcott School framed his response in terms of feeling puzzled about what he was doing: “I’d be feeling...’why am I doing this?’...because when new kids come along yeah you’re supposed to teach them introduce them to other people and be



friends and get along with each other and tell them what's wrong and what's right and tell them the ways of the school and all that".

#### *6.4.2.11 Nothing.*

In response to the question, "How do you think this girl is feeling?", one female participant at St Nicholas School stated, "They're feeling **nothing**. It seems to me they never feel anything. They don't feel guilt, they don't feel anything...because maybe something's happened in their life when they were younger or maybe they have their parents and they just don't know that that's the wrong thing to do".

### *6.4.3 General Emotional Attributions to the Follower and Self in the Role of Follower*

#### *6.4.3.1 Cheerfulness.*

Cheerfulness was commonly attributed to the follower. Participants primarily cited enjoyment of bullying the new pupil as the main reason for their attribution. For example, one girl from St Nicholas School said, "She looks sort of happy...she looks like she's giggling and laughing...'cos the other girl's just fallen on the floor...and made an idiot of herself". Similarly, a male participant from Westcott School reported, "He looks like he's enjoying bullying...because he likes watching people fall down and get teased and that". A number of participants cited the reasons for their attribution in terms of the follower feeling happy to be a part of the bully group. For example, one male pupil at Westcott School proposed that the follower felt "Happy...'cos he's part of the bullies". Then again, a number of participants suggested that the follower was happy because although he or she was not directly involved in the bullying they were a part of the group. For example, one male

participant at St Nicholas School held: “He’s just going along with them, laughing, like it’s all a big game”. One female at St Nicholas School said: “She [follower] thinks it’s quite funny because it’s the two big girls who are pushing her [new girl] around and she’s [follower] just going with them because she doesn’t want to be bullied, but then she thinks it’s quite funny when they bully her [new girl]”. This response also hints at the perceived protective factor of participating as a follower to prevent becoming the next victim. Another girl at St Nicholas School offered a reflective response: “Well, she doesn’t actually do anything, she just kind of laughs along and has a...the girl is probably thinking how silly, she could probably be quite nice if she doesn’t just want to be with this pop...maybe they’re the popular group of girls”. One girl from Westcott School suggested that the follower was feeling cheerful for exerting her power over another and making an impact: “Feeling happy that she’s little and she can bully a big girl so that she can get on her nerves”.

On the other hand, cheerfulness was attributed to self in the role of follower infrequently. Two pupils from Westcott School suggested that the follower was enjoying the bullying. One girl said: “She looks like she’s enjoying it....because she’s got all smirks on her face and stuff”. One boy said: “If I was him, I’d probably feel, the way he looks, he looks like he’s enjoying bullying...because he likes watching people fall down and get teased and that...”. Another girl from St Nicholas School perceived a desirable outcome in terms of her increased status. She said, “If I was her....yeah, I’d feel quite, well she looks a bit clever so I’d feel quite smart and like a bit of a know-all (laughs)...I’d feel sort of good in a way because I’d be showing off to my other friend”.



#### 6.4.3.2 *Shame.*

Shame was often attributed to the follower. A number of participants expressed this character's remorse for the victim in terms of regretting what they had done. For example, one male pupil at Westcott School said, "I'd feel sorry for the other little boy... 'cos they're like carrying on to do this stuff to the boy". One female pupil from Westcott School responded empathically: "I think she feels she didn't mean to do it to her, I think she feels...um, I think she feels a bit emotion for her because, 'cos she might feel sorry for the new girl...". Continuing, this participant expressed remorse for what she had not done: "...because she was hanging with the big girl and she wouldn't say 'Hello, how are you?' or all that and welcome her [new girl] in their school". A female participant from St Nicholas School succinctly expressed regret in terms of whether her engagement was coerced or voluntary: "If I was like, if, like, the other bullies, like, forced me into bullying her I'd feel sorry for her, but if, like, I was a bully then I wouldn't care (giggles)". A male participant from Westcott School suggested, that while he would feel regret, his confusion for engagement in the bullying would not be alleviated. He said, "Um, a bit, I think it's like he's taking a lot of part in what's going on...I think he feels good but bad... 'cos when you hate someone if you do something you feel good for a little bit but then you start feeling bad 'cos you done it... like you say, you wanna say sorry but it won't make it better so you just like start doing stuff that you wouldn't do".

A male participant from Westcott School suggested that, while the follower felt regret, he was joining in the bullying to be a part of the group. He said, "I think he's feeling that, he's probably thinking that they shouldn't be doing that, but he just wants to be in that group... 'cos he knows that he can get in big trouble and he knows



how it feels”. This response also alluded to the consequences of participating in the bullying and intimated that the follower had previously been a victim of bullying.

Follower shame was also expressed in terms of guilt for participating in the bullying. For example, one female from St Nicholas School replied that while feeling guilty for following the bully, the follower would be reflecting on the bully’s behaviour: “They’re sort of feeling guilty and they’re saying they’re like, “what’s she doing?”...And so, that’s what usually happens, one leader and then there’re the two other people and then they are just, a lot of the time think the things that she [leader] does are out of order”.

Shame was less often attributed to self in the role of follower. A couple of girls at St Nicholas School expressed shame in terms of regret for the victim, for example, one said: “I would feel sorry for her...because the other two are being quite nasty”.

Another girl at the same school expressed regret for causing the new girl pain: “I’d feel bad because I’m hurting somebody else”. One female participant from Westcott School, while expressing regret, reasoned that engagement in the bullying was a defence against becoming the next victim: “Um, I’d feel not too good about myself. I wouldn’t want to pick on her but I’d just do it so I wouldn’t get picked on as well by these girls”. A male pupil at St Nicholas School suggested that if he were the follower he would participate in the bullying to conform to the group. He claimed, “Um, maybe if that was the case, that I was trying to fit in with the other friends, the bullies, then maybe deep down I would be feeling really, like, silly and I shouldn’t have done that and, maybe, he should have told someone”. This reply also hints at a possible response strategy.

#### 6.4.3.3 *Nervousness.*

While nervousness was rarely attributed to the follower, a female participant from St Nicholas School suggested that the follower was worried because she had no choice in whether or not to participate. She suggested, “She looks a bit worried but it looks like the other girls are making her do it, but the other girls look a bit worried as well in case they get in trouble”. Furthermore, a female pupil from Westcott School claimed, “She’s [follower] always hiding and looking all around, she’s not really doing much, so she might be feeling ‘Why are my friends doing this?’”.

While nervousness was less often attributed to self in the role of follower, one girl expressed concern for becoming the next victim: “I’d feel a bit worried just in case they started bullying me and I would feel just worried”.

#### 6.4.3.4 *Surprise.*

A minority of pupils from Westcott School attributed surprise to the follower. Commonly, responses were framed in terms of self-reflection upon the bullies’ actions. For example, one male pupil said, “He’s feeling like ‘oh, why did he do that?’...‘cos like if you look in the first picture they’re like frowning and he’s like with his wide eyes...yeah, and in number 5 (*attack on personal possessions*) he’s, like, looking at the other one saying like ‘what are you doing?’”. Another male participant reflected: “He might feel like ‘Why the hell are we doing this? They don’t deserve to be beaten up’...‘cos he might be the smallest, yeah, and the leader might be thinking ‘oh, yeah if you don’t do it, otherwise we’re going to beat you up’... so he might feel like he has no choice”. Again, this response hints at the

engagement of the follower in terms of protection against becoming the next victim, together with the notion of a lack of choice.

Surprise was attributed to self as follower on one occasion. A female participant from Westcott School framed her response in terms of thwarted expectations: “I would be shocked badly...because, um, because that’s the brand new girl, I mean old school girls have to be nice to the brand new girl because she hasn’t been there before”.

#### 6.4.3.5 *Anger.*

While anger was seldom attributed to the follower, one female participant at Westcott School responded in terms of retaliation: “I think that she’s taking the revenge or something because she, all the way she’s, like, ripping things off her, like, trying to give her things, like, cutting her hair off”. Another female pupil at the same school thought that the follower looked the “meanest” because “she’s laughing at her, she keeps on smiling and giving her a cigarette and stuff and she’s got, like, some of her books”.

Anger was attributed to self in the role of follower on a couple of occasions, one in terms of annoyance. For example, one girl from Westcott School stated she would feel angry for not stopping the bullying: “Because I wouldn’t let my friends be rude to another person”. Another girl from St Nicholas School based her response specifically upon the vignette: “Probably annoyed because it looks like them two are just, she looks a bit annoyed, like, she’s, in that one (*group physical attack*), she’s trying to poke out and look around”.



#### 6.4.3.6 *Fear.*

While fear was not often attributed to the follower, engagement in the bullying as a protective factor against becoming the next victim was commonly cited as a reason for this attribution. For example, one female participant from St Nicholas School suggested, “I’ll do this or I’ll get beaten up ...I think she’s just thinking, because they might start picking on her because she wears glasses”. Another girl from the same school replied: “Scared...I think she’s just going along with the, going along with it...so she couldn’t be picked on as well”. A response from a male pupil from Westcott School suggested that the follower was concerned that he might become the next victim. He said, “I think he’s feeling scared...because he don’t want nothing to do with them and he don’t like bullying, ‘cos I know, ‘cos he don’t go round asking for money he just sits on the wall and he don’t look angry he looks kind of like scared, ‘cos in case like he bullies him and then they [the bullies] bully him...that’s why they’re behind him”.

Fear was less often attributed to self in the role of follower. In terms of the bully group, one female participant from St Nicholas School was concerned with their size: “I could really feel scared because they were bigger and stuff”. Another female from the same school was concerned with the bully group’s reaction to her not wanting to be involved: “Um, er, quite scared in case they found out that I wasn’t, didn’t want to just bully”. A male participant from Westcott School suggested fear of the consequences of being involved as a reason for the attribution and identified a response strategy: “I’d feel scared and I’d just run away...because I don’t really like bullies and, um, I don’t want to get told off, so I’d just stay away”. Another boy from the same school was concerned that he might become the next victim or that the

bullying would escalate, saying “Scared...because they might turn on me or do something worse”.

#### *6.4.3.7 Pride.*

Although pride was rarely attributed to the follower, several male participants framed their responses in terms of the follower feeling proud like the group of bullies. One male participant from St Nicholas School attributed pride to the follower and alluded to the notion that the follower participated in the bullying as a means of remaining friends with the bullies. He said: “I think he might have pushed him over and he’s feeling like I don’t care...or he might just be doing it because they’re his friends and the only way he would be able to stay their friend is if he does something bad and he might be feeling quite proud”.

Pride was more often attributed to self in the role of follower. One male participant at Westcott School suggested that he would gain strength from the bullies: “I’d feel, this never happened, but, like, I’m learning something from the bullies...I’m gonna be stronger than him and all that and then I’m going to bully everyone in the whole world”. Another stated, “I’d feel that I was lucky to be in one of them groups and no-one would bully him”, suggesting protection from victimization through involvement with the bullies. One girl from Westcott School attributed pride to self in the role of follower in terms of association with the bully: “She’s probably feeling that she’s proud of what they’re doing...because she’s on the bully’s side”.

#### 6.4.3.8 *Neglect.*

Neglect was rarely attributed to the follower. Two pupils from St Nicholas School suggested that the follower would feel left out of the bully group. One female stated, “In a funny...kind of left out but she still is like their friend, I suppose”. While a male pupil said, “He’s just like with them he’s not really paying attention...um, like left out”. Similarly, neglect was rarely attributed to self in the role of follower. One female pupil from St Nicholas School said: “I’d feel a bit different from the rest of them ‘cos they look sort of grumpy and she doesn’t really look that grumpy, she just looks like she’s a bit left out, as well, kind of thing”.

#### 6.4.3.9 *Disappointment.*

Disappointment was attributed to self as follower on one occasion. A male pupil at Westcott School framed his response in terms of his self-identity: “Because everyone, teachers, are always saying ‘be your own person don’t follow anybody else’”.

#### 6.4.3.10 *Sadness.*

Sadness was commonly attributed to self as follower. While most participants cited their bad behaviour as a reason for their attribution, their explanations were more complex. For example, one female participant at Westcott School reflected: “Um, I would feel if, like, if I was a bad person I would feel, I would have thought that I’d done the right thing but, like, now if I see, if I see like a video of that person and that was like me I would be upset”. A male pupil at St Nicholas School framed his response in terms of conformity with the group: “If he is trying to just fit in with them then he’ll probably be feeling upset as well that he’s been bad”. Another



focused his response on the behaviour of the group: “I would feel upset that the others wouldn’t just help him”.

## 6.5 *Moral Emotions*

### 6.5.1 *Victim*

#### 6.5.1.1 *Worry.*

In response to the question, “Can anyone in this story feel very worried? Why?”, the victim was most often cited compared with the bullies and the follower. A major theme that emerged for this attribution related to fear of threat or harm from the bullies. For example, one girl at St Nicholas School reasoned that the victim would feel worried: “Because she knows that everyday something horrible’s going to happen”. A male pupil at the same school suggested specifically, “Cos they’re threatening to cut off his hair, so if they don’t, they’re making him steal his money”. Another key theme that emerged was in terms of the victim’s anticipation of future danger or harm from the bullies. The most common concern for the future related to the continuation of the bullying, for example, one female participant said: “She’d be feeling worried because she doesn’t know what they’re going to do to her next or what’s going to happen”, and whether the bullying behaviour was going to get worse. For example, one boy from Westcott School reasoned: “Um, I think he feels worried, the one who’s getting bullied...’cos he’s not sure at any stage if they’re gonna really, really beat him up, or like they’re going to spoil his life at school”. Less commonly mentioned reasons for the attribution of worry to the victim included not knowing what to do in response to the bullying, not feeling welcomed by the children at the new school, making the wrong impression, feeling unsafe and getting into trouble.

In response to the question, “In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more worried? Why?”, the most commonly cited situation was blackmail, which participants reasoned was because the victim was being physically threatened. Social isolation was mentioned in a number of instances because participants perceived that the victim anticipated that the bullying was going to get worse, for example, one girl at Westcott School reasoned: “Because they’re talking about her and, um, they’re like probably planning what to do next with her or something”. Real damage to personal possessions was mentioned on a number of occasions because participants surmised that the victim would feel more worried about this situation due to the consequences of the book being damaged. For example, one female participant at St Nicholas School stated, “Cos maybe that’s, like, her homework...because if it, like, has to be handed in then it’ll be late and she might get into trouble”. Coercion was also referred to, for example, one female pupil at St Nicholas School said, “Probably ‘cos she’s trying to force her, to give her a cigarette”.

Worry was most often attributed to self in the role of victim compared with the bullies and the follower, with participants’ main explanation for this attribution in terms of fear of harm (“because I was getting bullied”, being hurt, feeling used, feeling picked on). Anticipation of future harm or danger were also mentioned when taking the role of the victim, in terms of the continuation of the bullying and what would happen next, for example, one boy at Westcott School stated: “I’d be feeling very worried for what happens next, they might even never stop bullying me”. A number of participants expressed concern that the bullying might get worse, for example, one male pupil at Westcott School said, “Because if I was the one that was



getting bullied then I would probably feel worried because I think they're probably going to beat me up". Less commonly mentioned reasons for the attribution of worry to self in the role of victim included not knowing what to do in response to the bullying, the reaction of the class, and wondering "Why me?".

#### 6.5.1.2 *Shame.*

Shame was least often attributed to the victim compared with the bullies and the follower, and, when it was, more usually by males. According to participants' responses, the main reasons for this attribution, were the victim's actual experience of being bullied and the notion that the victim had offended the bullies (broken up the bully group, done something bad to the bullies, hurt the bullies' feelings, said something wrong to the bullies). For example, one male pupil at Westcott School held: "He might have done something which might have hurt their feelings". Feeling humiliated was cited as another reason for attributing shame to the victim, usually in terms of being laughed at or for falling over. Shame was also attributed to the victim in terms of difference, usually due to his or her appearance. Other reasons cited included shame for choice of new school and, in the case of two male participants, shame for not defending himself against the bullies.

In response to the question, "In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more ashamed? Why?", the most commonly cited situation was social isolation (*vignette 10*), usually in terms of the victim being "all alone". For example, one male participant at Westcott School said: "'Cos he's just on his own, yeah, with no-one and he's just, like, when people get ashamed they, like, just go somewhere by theirselves [sic]". Group physical attack (*vignette 7*) and blackmail (*vignette 9*)



situations were also cited due to falling over and feeling humiliated, and acquiescing to the bullies' requests, respectively.

Shame was least often attributed to self in the role of the victim compared with the bullies and the follower. No main themes emerged, that is, a variety of reasons were cited for attributing shame to self as victim including feeling humiliated, wearing the wrong clothes, acquiescing to the bullies' requests, not defending oneself, being bullied and having no friends.

#### *6.5.1.3 Pride.*

In response to the question, "Can anyone in this story feel proud? Why?", the victim was rarely mentioned. On the occasions that they were, the most commonly cited reason for this attribution was the notion that the victim had not complied with the bullies' requests. As one male pupil from Westcott School's response illustrated, "Well, I think that, this is mad thinking, but I think he might be feeling proud because I don't think that he's letting them do much to him because when they hand out this to him he doesn't actually take it and like he's ignoring them so they must start to feel like 'oh, he ain't worth it anymore', so I think that he's proud 'cos he's not doing anything back". Other less commonly cited reasons included pride for running away which would worry the bullies, the bullies leaving, and the victim not caring. Pride was only attributed to self in the role of victim on one occasion; the reason cited was due to the victim not listening to the bullies.

#### *6.5.1.4 Indifference.*

In response to the question, “Can anyone in this story feel okay? Why?”, the victim was rarely mentioned. A male participant at Westcott School reasoned that the new boy might feel indifferent in the neutral scenario: “Cos it’s his first day”, as did a female pupil at St Nicholas School. Indifference was not attributed to self in the role of victim.

### *6.5.2 Bully/bullies*

#### *6.5.2.1 Indifference.*

Indifference was most often attributed to the bully compared with the victim and the follower, with participants mentioning this character’s role as the bully and engagement in bullying the victim as the main reason for their attribution. For example, one female at Westcott School reasoned: “Because they’re not the ones that are, like, being bullied, like, they’re the ones that are the bullies”. A number of responses suggested that the bullies were making the victim do things, hinting at a power imbalance. For example, one male pupil from St Nicholas School said, “Because they don’t really care, they’re just trying to vandalize everything he has and annoy him and try to make him do bad things and they might even be trying to get him into trouble”. This theme was further illustrated by another male participant from St Nicholas School who articulated his response in terms of a power imbalance: “Because like they’re in control...like bullying him, yeah, and they realize that he’s quite weak and they gang up on him and they can, like, do whatever they want”. Feeling okay was also attributed to the bullies in terms of their familiarity with bullying others. For example, a male pupil at Westcott School who rationalised that the bully was feeling okay said, “Because he’s the one probably, like, in the story,

like, the best at doing it because he's done it so many times before". This notion was further demonstrated by a response from a female participant at St Nicholas School who replied, "Because she's the one that's doing it and people who usually get into the habit of doing things like this they just think it's alright to do it 'cos they're powerful and they're popular and they just think it's alright to do stuff like this to them". This response also alludes to the perception that popularity permits the opportunity to bully others.

A number of responses were constructed in terms of the bully feeling okay because he or she felt "big" or "cool" or was telling the other two what to do because he or she was the leader of the gang. Furthermore, participants attributed feeling okay to the bully in terms of feeling confident that there would not be any repercussions to the bully's behaviour. For example, one female at Westcott School said, "they know that they won't get in trouble". One male at Westcott School said, "He looks like 'oh we can get away with it'". Another said, "'Cos he thinks that he can get away with it and blame it on him, he's got someone to blame". Various other responses included reasons that were constructed in terms of the bullies finding the bullying funny, thinking it is okay to bully others, unaware of what they were doing, not caring, not knowing what it was like to be bullied.

In response to the question, "In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more okay? Why?", the most commonly cited situations were the neutral scenario (the new pupil arrives at the new school) and coercion. The neutral scenario (*vignette 1*) was cited either "because they haven't started to bully him yet" (male, St Nicholas School) or, conversely, because the bully was anticipating bullying the new boy or



girl. For example, one female pupil at Westcott School reasoned: “‘Cos she thinks here comes the new girl, guys, and all that stuff, talking to them two and saying ‘oh, come on guys let’s be horrible to her ‘cos she’s new’”. The coercion scenario (*vignette 8*) was usually cited for the simple reason that the bullies were forcing the victim to smoke. For example, one female at Westcott School said “Because she’s (*bully*) probably smoked and she wants the other girl to smoke”. One male participant from the same school claimed “‘Cos he like wants to hurt him (*victim*)...because he wants him to get hurt by getting a match against his chin”. Less commonly, social exclusion (*vignette 2*; because nothing much has happened so far in the story) and teasing (*vignette 3*; because they’re happy and laughing and they’ve only just started picking on the victim) were cited.

Indifference was only attributed to self in the role of bully. On these occasions, the reasons cited included not caring, being the leader of the gang, previous bullying experience and the perception that self in the role of bully would not get into trouble.

#### 6.5.2.2 *Pride.*

Pride was most often attributed to the bully compared with the victim and the follower, with participants citing engagement in bullying the victim as the main reason for their attribution. For example, one female pupil at Westcott School reasoned: “Those three might be feeling proud...’cos they’re doing something to someone else”. This theme was further illustrated by responses from some participants, who suggested that being mean, hurtful or upsetting the victim was a reason to feel proud. For example, one female participant from St Nicholas School explained: “Because she gets pleasure, I think, out of doing this to people, it’s just

some people get pleasure out of hurting other people". A number of responses suggested that the bullies were feeling proud for being the leader of the bully group. For example, one male pupil at Westcott School stated: "Because he's leading the whole organization" and a female participant from the same school said: "I think the blonde haired girl's feeling proud because she's got a little gang around her".

Feeling proud was also attributed to the bullies in terms of feeling "big", "cool" and "hard". For example, one male participant at Westcott School reasoned that the blonde boy felt proud: "Because he's done most of the stuff and he thinks that doing that is doing to make him all cool and Mr Nice Guy". Another male pupil at the same school said of the blonde character: "'Cos, like, he's, yeah, if I do this I'll get even, gonna get even more friends. I'm all hard". Not caring was also cited as a reason for the bully to feel proud. For example, one male pupil at St Nicholas School said, "Probably the three boys 'cos they wouldn't care any more for that boy because look what they've done to him". While one participant at Westcott School's response suggested that the bullies might feel proud, he further explained: "In their minds they might feel proud about bullying him, but really down inside they're thinking 'what have I done?'" Like, now they're ashamed of theirself [sic] for making someone be ashamed of theirself [sic]. Yeah, so that as soon as he comes in they think 'oh, let's start on him 'cos he's the new boy and, like, we'll never regret doing this' but after a while you just start getting more and more regretful". Other less frequently mentioned reasons for attributing pride to the bully included smoking, feeling victorious, finding it funny, for not being the victim, previous experience of bullying and thinking that they wouldn't get caught.



In response to the question, “In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more proud? Why?”, the most commonly cited situations were real damage to possessions (*vignette 6*) because the victim’s books have been cut up, and group physical attack (*vignette 7*) because the new girl or boy has fallen over and the group are just watching. For example, one girl at St Nicholas School said, “When they’ve kind of just seen her falling over, or something like that, not when they’re actually doing something, it’s when they’re looking at her falling over”. Teasing (*vignette 3*) was also cited as a situation in which the bullies might be feeling more proud because the bullies were laughing at the new pupil.

In contrast, pride was rarely attributed to self in the role of bully. On the few occasions that it was, the reasons cited included getting attention, bullying the victim, being a part of the bully gang, and upsetting the victim.

#### 6.5.2.3 *Shame.*

Shame was most often attributed to the bully compared with the victim and the follower, with participants citing the actual bullying behaviours perpetrated against the victim as the main reason for their attribution. For example, one female participant from Westcott School reasoned: “Yeah, I think these two here, because they’re the ones who are being, making her do things and they’re the ones who have been cutting up her work and pushing her and stuff”. Furthermore, a number of participants’ responses suggested that bullies were aware that their behaviour was hurtful. For example, one female pupil at St Nicholas School replied, “The bullies might...sometimes they might think that they were being a bit nasty to her, but they keep on doing it”. A number of participants attributed shame to the bullies in terms



of knowing that what they were doing to the victim was wrong. For example, one female pupil at St Nicholas school suggested: “They know that it’s not nice to do things, to do horrible things to other people, so at the end they’re feeling a bit ashamed”. On a number of occasions, pupils at St Nicholas School attributed shame to the bully because they perceived that the bullying behaviours committed against the victim had been unprovoked. For example, one male participant responded: “Yeah, those two...because they’ve been doing all these horrible things to him and he hasn’t done anything to them so they’re just looking at him for no reason”.

Atypically, shame was also attributed to the bully in terms of being caught. For example, one female participant at St Nicholas School said: “Because if they’ve realized what they’ve done they would feel ashamed of themselves and, because if, like, they took her book and then the teachers found out they’d feel ashamed of themselves and say to themselves ‘Why did I do that? Why did I do that?’”. Indeed, as these examples show feeling ashamed after the event was cited on a number of occasions suggesting that participants perceived that the bullies had the capacity for self-reflection.

In response to the question, “In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more ashamed? Why?”, the most commonly cited situations were group physical attack (*vignette 7*) and social isolation (*vignette 10*). For example, group physical attack was cited by one female pupil at St Nicholas: “I think tripping her over...because they see that all her, she’s fallen over and she’s probably hurt herself and they might be thinking if I, somebody did that to me how would I feel?”. Social isolation was commonly cited as a situation in which the opportunity for self-reflection by the bullies was possible, for example, “Maybe that one, the last one, ‘cos it’s the end, I

think it's the end of the day and they're looking back on what they've done" (female, Westcott). Attack on personal possessions (*vignette 5*), real damage to personal possessions (*vignette 6*) and blackmail (*vignette 9*) were also mentioned as situations in which the bullies might feel more ashamed.

Shame was most often attributed to self in the role of bully compared with the follower and the victim, typically in terms of the bullying behaviours perpetrated against the victim. A number of participants mentioned that they would feel ashamed after the event. For example, one female at St Nicholas School said, "I'd probably just do it and then I'd feel really bad afterwards". Other, less commonly, mentioned reasons for the attribution of shame to self as bully included an intolerance to difference, not helping the victim, doing something wrong, empathy with the victim, committing hurtful behaviour against the victim and listening to one's conscience.

#### 6.5.2.4 Worry.

Worry was less often attributed to the bully compared with the victim, with participants generally citing fear of the consequences of engaging in the bullying as the main reason for their attribution. Frequently, participants suggested that the bully was worried that the victim would either tell someone (a teacher or the victim's parents), or that they would "get caught", and "get into trouble" (be reprimanded, receive punishment, receive detention). For example, one female participant at St Nicholas School reasoned, "She might end up telling her parents and then the parents might come in and talk to the headmaster [sic] and they might get detention or something". One female pupil at Westcott School suggested that the bully might feel



worried that she would be bullied at a later date: “The gang might be feeling a bit worried because they might get into trouble or some other people might...come and do the same to her”. One pupil at St Nicholas School suggested that at the end of the day all the bullies might feel worried because, “They’ve done nasty things and they’ve been horrible”. One boy at Westcott School elaborated on the bully’s strategy for not being caught claiming, “I think he doesn’t want to get into trouble and things, but he tries to do it [the bullying] sneakily so when he’s with the teachers he’s like all Mr Nice but when he’s left the teachers he does things”.

In response to the question, “In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more worried? Why?”, the most commonly cited situation was group physical attack which participants conjectured was due to a variety of reasons (the victim was not expecting it, the bully felt sorry for the victim, the teacher might see and they might get into trouble). Coercion (*vignette 8*) was also mentioned which participants reasoned was due to the bullies forcing the victim to smoke. The situation depicting the victim in social isolation was also cited on a couple of occasions for its representation of the culmination of a series of bullying episodes and the perceived threat of being found out.

Whereas worry was less often attributed to self in the role of bully compared with the victim, the main reason for this attribution was that self as bully would fear the consequences of bullying, that is, the victim would either tell someone or they would “get caught”, and “get into trouble” (“expulsion”, “exclusion”, “suspension”). A number of participants were concerned that, as a consequence of engaging in bullying behaviours, self in the role of bully would themselves be bullied either by



the victim's siblings or by another group. For example, one female pupil at Westcott School said: "Because once I did it I'd think 'Oh, I shouldn't have did that now because then I'll get in trouble and, like, may be she will get gang, a bigger gang than I've got and she will start bullying us'". One female participant at St Nicholas School expressed feeling worried in terms of breaking school rules: "Doing something we're not supposed to do like being in the school during break-time and doing stuff to the girl's books, I think I would feel worried then".

### 6.5.3 *Follower*

#### 6.5.3.1 *Worry.*

Worry was less often attributed to the follower compared with the bully and the victim. Typically, this attribution was made in terms of the followers' fear of the consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour (getting into trouble, being caught, becoming the next victim, taking the blame for the leader bullies). For example, one male participant at St Nicholas School claimed, "Yeah, it's getting out of hand leading to trouble...". A female from the same school said "Maybe one of the girls might be worried that they'll get caught or something". Several participants suggested that the follower might be afraid of becoming the next victim. For example, one male at St Nicholas School suggested "...the boy who's trying fit in [could be worried] because he knows he's done something wrong but if he starts helping the new boy then the others might start pushing him around as well". A number of participants claimed that the follower was worried about taking the blame for the bullying behaviour. For example, a male participant at Westcott School stated "...like if they get caught he's going to be like the one that gets the blame or they might say 'it wasn't us it was the little boy'".

Participants characterised the follower as someone who “tags along with” the bullies, someone who is “not really doing that much”, someone who is “following them, doing nothing”, or someone “who’s trying to fit in”. Accordingly, worry was attributed to the follower in terms of this character not being fully engaged in the bullying. Whether this indicated that participants were worried for not playing a bigger part in the bullying episode or for only playing a small part is unclear. For example, one female participant at St Nicholas school said: “Cos they’re not really doing anything...because they might not be, like, into bullying her...they might be the ones who are feeling sorry for her”. On the other hand, one girl at Westcott School suggested: “I think that little one there is worried because she’s not really doing much, she’s just laughing and stuff, and I think that she thinks, like, I’m not going to really get involved in it that much, I’m just going to laugh about it”.

A number of participants perceived that the follower would feel sorry for the victim, for example, one male pupil at Westcott School suggested: “...he feels like going up to him and saying sorry”. One male pupil from St Nicholas School attributed worry to the follower in terms of anticipation of the continuation of the bullying “Because he thinks that the other two bullies might hurt the new boy again”. One girl at St Nicholas School attributed worry to the follower in relation to the intensity of the bullying, proposing, “Um, the girl who tags along with them, I think she’s, um, feeling a tiny bit worried, like, she might get a bit, like, if she sees them bullying someone a lot, she might get a bit worried”.



In response to the question, “In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more worried? Why?”, participants more commonly mentioned group physical attack (*vignette 7*) and coercion (*vignette 8*).

Worry was less often attributed to self in the role of follower compared with the victim and the bullies, with participants citing fear of the consequences of participating in the bullying (“in case somebody bullied me”, getting into trouble, being found out) as the main reason for their attribution. A couple of participants proposed that they would be worried because they would not want the bully to engage in bullying behaviours, for example, one male at Westcott School said: “I wouldn’t want my friend to do stuff that bad like that...I’d be stopping him”.

#### 6.5.3.2 *Shame.*

Shame was less often attributed to the follower compared with the bully, with participants citing this character’s ambivalence regarding their participation in the bullying as the main reason for their attribution. Primarily, shame was attributed to the follower in terms of being involved but not really wanting to be involved. For example, one girl at Westcott School said, “Because, like, she doesn’t really want to be a bully or anything like that”. Additionally, in terms of questioning his or her part in the bullying one female participant at Westcott School said, “‘Cos she’s just looking away she might think in her head I shouldn’t have done that, I shouldn’t have done that to the new girl”. Other reasons cited included participating in the bullying while knowing that such behaviour is wrong. For example, one female pupil at St Nicholas School held: “Because she knows that they shouldn’t be doing it”. A number of female participants reasoned that their engagement in bullying was



as a form of protection against becoming the next victim. As one participant from St Nicholas School said, “She’s feeling a bit ashamed that she has to do this but she still wants to be safe because she knows she won’t get bullied if she can stay best friends with the bullies”. Less specifically, shame was attributed to the follower for being involved with the bully group. For example, one female participant at St Nicholas School stated, “Yeah, she’s been looking at what they’re doing and feeling ashamed that she ever joined the gang”. A number of participants suggested that the follower knew what it was like for the victim because they had themselves experienced bullying. For example, one girl at St Nicholas School suggested that the follower felt ashamed: “Because she might have been bullied before and she can know what it feels like ‘cos she wears glasses”.

Shame was less often attributed to self in the role of follower compared with the bullies, with participants overwhelmingly citing ambivalence regarding their participation in the bullying as the main reason for their attribution. Primarily, responses were framed in terms of self in the role of follower feeling ashamed for being coerced into participating, or assisting against their better judgement. For example, one male pupil at Westcott School said: “’Cos the blonde one’s like telling me what to do and sometimes them bullies, like, they are all, like, if the head one says ‘yeah I’m gonna beat you up’ and then the other two goes ‘yeah, yeah, we’re going to beat you up’ they all agree with what he says”. A number of participants suggested that they would feel ashamed because they would not really want to participate in the bullying. For example, one male participant at Westcott School replied, “Because, like, I wouldn’t want to, I would, like, I don’t want to bully them, these guys are pushing me into bullying”. A number of participants explained that

they would feel ashamed for not helping the victim. For example, one male pupil at St Nicholas School suggested that he would feel ashamed: “Because whatever you do you have to help others. A number of participants questioned their role in the bullying. For example, one female pupil replied that she would feel ashamed: “Because I would be thinking to myself that why am I trying to impress the other children, I should be running my own life, welcoming the new girl, not being mean to her”. A number of other reasons were cited for the attribution of shame to self in the role of follower including not knowing the victim and previous experience of being bullied.

#### *6.5.3.3 Indifference.*

While indifference was less often attributed to the follower compared with the bully, generally the happy, smiling attitude of the character was cited as the main reason for the attribution. For example, one male participant at Westcott School said, “Look at the expression on his face when he’s giving it to...like, smiling and he’s look smiling there, in most of the pictures he’s smiling”. As the following response from a girl at Westcott School illustrated, she perceived that the follower was happy for her role in the bullying in terms of indirect involvement. She claimed, “Cos she’s laughing and mainly she hasn’t did any of it...but all...she’s joining in with them...and because, say, if somebody was walking down the road and there was two girls and one actually started it and the other one...and both of them started it, the other one would just come along and she won’t even be involved with it. I think she’s involved with it because she’s their friend...they’re kind of bullies”.



In response to the question, “In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more okay? Why?”, the most commonly cited situations were coercion (*vignette 8*; because she would get sick after smoking, because it’s out of school so it doesn’t matter) and social isolation (*vignette 10*; because the follower is going to make friends with the new boy, because they’ve made him feel left out). Less commonly group physical attack (*vignette 7*; ‘cos he thinks it’s funny) and neutral scenario (*vignette 1*; because they haven’t started yet) were mentioned. Indifference was not attributed to self as follower.

#### 6.5.3.4 *Pride.*

Pride was attributed to the follower very infrequently, far less than the bully. The most commonly cited reasons for this attribution included the happy, laughing demeanour of the follower character and the perception that the follower had not fully engaged in the bullying. A female pupil at Westcott School’s explanation succinctly illustrates this: “‘Cos she’s just giggling and smirking and just thinking ‘oh my God, I’m so glad what I’ve done’ ‘cos she doesn’t really do anything much”. Occasionally it was suggested that the follower character could feel proud for bullying the victim. For example, “Maybe because it looks like she’s really enjoying herself that she’s doing this to someone else who’s new and it’s someone that she can pick on more”. One girl suggested that the follower could feel more proud in the teasing episode (*vignette 3*) and another mentioned coercion (*vignette 8*) because smoking is the worst thing that you can do”. Also, one pupil at Westcott School suggested that the follower would be feeling most proud at the end of the day “because probably now they’re talking about what they’ve done she’s probably felt really happy and maybe she was really bored at the beginning of the day and now



she's just got her anger stuff out on the new girl". Pride was not attributed to self as follower.

### *6.6 Coping Strategies for Bullying Situations*

In response to questions about what participants would consider doing to change the bullying situation, five categories of coping strategy emerged from the analysis, that is seeking social support, directly addressing the bullies, avoidance, finding other friends and verbal or physical retaliation. It should be noted that some participants might have considered using more than one strategy.

#### *6.6.1 Seeking Social Support: "I would tell someone...the teacher or my dad or one of my friends"*

The most commonly considered coping strategy was seeking social support, with the majority of participants stating that in the event of being bullied they would tell someone. Males and females cited this strategy in approximately equal numbers and in the majority of cases participants stated that they would tell an adult. For example, a female pupil at St Nicholas said, "I'd tell my parents and tell the teacher and get it sorted out". Several participants' responses suggested that they perceived telling a member of staff would provide an instant solution, for example, "I think I would tell the teacher or the head teacher to solve this problem and they'd [the bullies] never do it again" (female, Westcott).

Two male pupils from St Nicholas School offered perspectives in terms of reflecting on the consequences for the bullies in the event of the bullying continuing, including support for the bully. One pupil said: "...if you told a teacher they could speak to

the other boys and, like, if they carry on maybe suspend them or tell their parents and stuff like that". Another said: "I would tell a teacher, yeah, report it and um tell people what's been happening because if they do it again they're just going to get in even more trouble and, um, then they'll be like reported like a bully and then they get help like how to solve it". This participant's response also suggests that the problem of bullying lies with the bully.

However, several participants suggested that they would be frightened or scared to tell someone. For example, a response from one female participant at St Nicholas School suggested that it would prove difficult to tell a teacher: "Um, I'd go and tell a teacher and... 'cos I'd try not to be scared of telling the teacher...". Furthermore, one male pupil from Westcott School hinted at fear of the consequences of telling the teacher in terms of the bullying continuing: "I'd like tell like my teacher or head teacher... 'Cos like if they don't... 'cos if they tell the head teacher they'd be like 'oh, yeah, you told, I'm going to keep doing it'". Yet another male pupil at Westcott School's response hinted at reluctance to change things due to the physical stature of the bully: "Um, I'd be actually scared to change things...no, but if they wasn't [sic] that big then I would probably tell someone like my mum or something". One male pupil at Westcott School identified the number of bullies involved as an important factor in deciding when to seek help. He responded, "I would probably either tell, well I wouldn't like handling it myself 'cos there's three of them, but if it upset me a lot then if there was one then I might handle it myself, but seeing as there's three you can't really handle it yourself, so you'd probably go and tell a teacher or an adult in the school". His response also alluded to the notion that the bullying would have to upset him a great deal for him to seek adult support.



### 6.6.2 *Directly Addressing the Bullies: “I would stand up for myself”*

The next most commonly considered coping strategy was directly addressing the bullies in terms of “sorting things out with them”. Predominantly participants from Westcott School stated that in the event of finding themselves in the situation depicted in the story, they would employ this approach. Many participants expressed this strategy in terms of facing up to the bullies. For example, one female at Westcott School held “What I would do is...she’s not standing up for herself I would stand up for myself and...she’s like threatening to harm her, yeah, I would stand up for myself and say ‘You’re not really going to harm me, you’re just saying that ‘cos you want someone else’s money’”.

A number of participants at Westcott School stated that they would explicitly ask the bullies to stop the behaviour. For example, one female pupil stated, “I would say ‘I don’t want to start a fight, start arguing or doing anything bad’, but I would say that ‘I don’t want to start an argument, or I don’t want anything bad, but can this just stop?’”. A minority of participants suggested that they would try to reason with the bullies. For example, one male pupil at Westcott School suggested, “I’d ask the small boy ‘Why are you doing this?’, and I’d talk to the two big boys and say ‘why do you bully people because it’s not really good ‘cos when you’re older you get in big trouble’”. Another male held: “I’d go to them and say ‘could you please stop picking on me because you’re bullies and you’re only doing it to be cool and you can be cool without being bullies’”. One female participant at Westcott School indicated that she would try to seek the bullies’ understanding: “I’d probably tell them how I felt and how it would be like if it was you...”. A number of participants suggested that they would threaten to tell a teacher, for example, one male pupil at Westcott



School held that he would say: “Get that thing away from my throat...if you won’t I’ll have to tell the head teacher”. Several participants, mainly at St Nicholas School, proposed that they would ask the bullies if they could be their friend. For example, one female said “I would, um, say to them, um, ‘could I just be your friend and not be pushed around?’”.

### *6.6.3 Avoidance: “Run away”*

The next most commonly considered strategy was avoidance in terms of either physically distancing ones’ self from the bullying situation or ignoring the bullies. Physical distancing was considered both in terms of avoiding the scene of the bullying or in terms of leaving the school altogether. With regard to avoiding the scene of the bullying, participants at St Nicholas school were more likely to frame their responses in terms of “running away”. For example, one female stated, “...I wouldn’t just go and hide I might run away but I wouldn’t run away behind a tree”. Whereas, participants at St Nicholas were more likely to consider avoiding the scene in terms of “walking away”, for example, one male pupil said “...if they say ‘oi you come here’ I’d just like walk away...”. A handful of participants stated that they would change the bullying situation by leaving the school, for example, one female at St Nicholas considered “I’d ask if I could change schools”. Four participants considered ignoring the bullies. For example, one female participant at Westcott School said, “Actually I would ignore them but it would be hard...”. A male pupil at St Nicholas claimed, “Um, I just wouldn’t talk to them or see them...”.

#### *6.6.4 Finding Other Friends: "I'd just go and play with somebody else"*

Finding other friends was considered by five participants; females only considered this strategy. For example, one participant at Westcott School suggested, "And go and make friends with another nice pair of people instead of bullies". Another stated, "I might make some new friends or something".

#### *6.6.5 Verbal and Physical Retaliation: "I might start bullying them"*

A handful of participants stated that if they found themselves being bullied they would retaliate either verbally or physically. One female at St Nicholas held "Well I wouldn't be so shy about it I wouldn't let them push me around I'd sort of if they were being cheeky to me I'd be cheeky back...". In terms of physical retaliation, one male participant at Westcott School replied: "I would really seriously think about getting my own group and threatening them...I mean like just going up to them and saying 'don't pick on my friend otherwise I'll beat you up', 'cos then they might listen and walk off". This response also indicates the notion of bystander support for a friend who is experiencing victimization. While a female pupil at St Nicholas School suggested, "I'd fight back and show them that I'm not some kind of weird person who let's anyone walk over me" her response also alludes to a perception of the victim as odd and lacking in self-esteem.

### *6.7 Emotional Release Strategies for Bullying Situations*

In response to questions about what participants could think or say to themselves to make themselves feel better, eight categories of emotional release strategy emerged from the analysis, that is cognitive-based strategies, avoidance, seeking social support, finding other friends, wishful-thinking, directly addressing the bullies,



nothing and retaliation. It should be noted that some participants might have considered using more than one strategy.

#### *6.7.1 Cognitive-based Strategies: "...it doesn't really matter..."*

The most commonly considered emotional release strategies were cognitive-based, that is, attempts to minimize the negative impact either by selective interpretation of the events or by efforts to view the situation from a different perspective (cognitive reframing), for example, "it doesn't matter" and making attempts to maintain a positive self-image (bolstering), for example, "I wouldn't do it myself". In terms of attempting to minimize the negative impact of the bullying by selective interpretation of the events, one female from St Nicholas said she would think to herself "I'd say that it doesn't really matter". Another female from the same school said that she would tell herself "They're not hurting me they're only just doing little things to me so it doesn't it's not that bad...". A female from Westcott School said that she would think to herself "They're only bullies they can't go round by themselves because if you put one bully by themselves then they couldn't do anything, they have to go round in their little gang". A male participant from the same school stated, "I would say, I'd think to myself that no-one could spoil what I'm going to do later in life so I'm going to do whatever I want to do later in life". With regard to efforts to maintain a positive self-image, mostly female participants from Westcott School said that they would consider using this strategy. For example, one female claimed "Say I'm ignoring them, they're just being bad at the moment and I'm the one that's not in the wrong". Another held "I'd think to myself that maybe they're just bullying me 'cos they're jealous or maybe they're bullying me 'cos I'm more nicer to other



people and I'm not bullying them they want to be more like me so they're bullying me trying to make me not very big".

### *6.7.2 Avoidance: "Don't go near them..."*

The next most commonly considered strategy was avoidance in terms of either physically distancing ones' self from the bullying situation or ignoring the bullies. Physical distancing was considered both in terms of avoiding the scene of the bullying or in terms of leaving the school altogether. A minority of participants, mainly females from St Nicholas School, considered using distancing as an emotional release strategy usually in terms of "staying away". One female participant at St Nicholas suggested that she would think to herself "Maybe just stay away from them...". One female pupil from the same school advocated thinking "...go to a different school". A small number of participants considered telling themselves that they would ignore the bullies. One female participant at Westcott School claimed that she would think to herself "I'd just try to like ignore them and don't go near them or if they are saying something to you like in number 8 (*coercion*) they get they're making her have a cigarette so I'd just ignore them and don't do it".

### *6.7.3 Seeking Social Support: "I'd tell the headmaster"*

Seeking social support was the next most commonly considered emotional release strategy, with most participants stating that to make themselves feel better they would consider telling someone. In most cases, participants considered that they would tell a teacher. For example, one male participant at Westcott School said "I'd probably say I'm going to tell the teacher or I'm gonna tell the teacher". A handful

or participants from St Nicholas School considered that they would tell their parents. One male participant stated "...I can tell me mum when I get home...".

#### *6.7.4 Finding Other Friends: "Make some other friends"*

Finding other friends was considered as an emotional release strategy by a handful of participants, again mainly females from St Nicholas School. For example, one girl said, "I'd think that there's lots of other friends in the school people in the school and I'll make friends with them".

#### *6.7.5 Wishful Thinking: "They might stop"*

A minority of participants, mainly males, considered wishful thinking as an emotional release strategy, in terms of either wishing or hoping that the situation would be different. One male participant at St Nicholas School said, "I wish they hadn't gone to this school". Another male participant at Westcott School thought, "It might be all over by tomorrow".

#### *6.7.6 Directly Addressing the Bullies: "Um do you want to be friends with me?...And they'd say 'sure yes'"*

A minority of participants considered directly addressing the bullies, either in terms of facing up to them about the bullying or in terms of making friends with them. In terms of facing up to the bullies, one male pupil at Westcott School considered "I could say something to them like 'stop keep on harassing me' or something 'cos I'm going to tell the head teacher' and then it might stop...". With regard to making friends with the bullies, one girl at St Nicholas School said that she would think to herself "I'd say let me ask them if they want to be my friend".

### *6.7.7 Nothing: “Everyday you get bullied, and after a while...you don’t know what to do”*

Two female pupils from St Nicholas school responded there was nothing that they could say or think to themselves that would make themselves feel better. One said: “When you’re in a situation like that there’s nothing that can that can make you feel better, you just try, you try and make yourself feel better, but there’s **nothing** that can make you feel better at all”. Another claimed: “Um, there’s not really much you can say really, they’re just being horrible to you so...”.

### *6.7.8 Retaliation*

One female participant at St Nicholas School considered “I’d probably think to myself I’d either get them back or go and tell a teacher and tell her that I’m being bullied by them three people”.

## *6.8 Story Outcomes*

### *6.8.1 Optimistic: The Children All Play Together*

In response to the question, “How do you think this story will most probably end?”, the majority of participants, particularly girls, from Westcott School thought that the most likely outcome to the hypothetical story would be the optimistic vignette, that is, all the children playing together. In contrast, no participants from St Nicholas School selected this story outcome.



### *6.8.2 Pessimistic: The Victim Remains Alone*

Whereas, three children, all females, from Westcott School selected the pessimistic ending as the most likely story outcome, no participants from St Nicholas School selected this ending.

### *6.8.3 Peer Social Support: The Victim Seeks the Support of a Peer*

The majority of participants from St Nicholas School and about one quarter from Westcott School selected the peer social support ending as the most likely outcome to the hypothetical story.

### *6.8.4 Adult Social Support: The Victim Seeks the Support of an Adult*

A minority of participants from both schools selected adult social support as the most likely outcome to the hypothetical story.

## *6.9 Summary*

This chapter presented the results of a qualitative content analysis of the interview data collected during Study 1. This approach to data analysis was selected as it focused on meaning rather than measurement, and provided the opportunity to explore the whole of the content, which would otherwise be inaccessible to a quantitative content analysis (Kracauer, 1952). Moreover, it enabled me to listen to the words of the children's accounts, which, in turn, provided me with knowledge and understanding about bullying in primary school, from the children's perspectives and in their own voices (Berg, 2004). The aim of this final section of the chapter is to summarize the key findings.

In terms of general emotional attributions, the results from Study 1 demonstrated that negative emotions (sadness, neglect, fear) were most commonly attributed to the new boy or girl with the bullying behaviour cited as the main reason for the attributions. Positive emotions (cheerfulness, pride) were most often attributed to the bullies with enjoyment of bullying and desirable outcomes commonly cited as reasons for these attributions. In contrast, in stepping into the role of the bullies, participants were more likely to attribute shame, anger and sadness to the self than to cite positive emotions. Mixed emotions (cheerfulness, shame) were most often attributed to those characters identified by participants as the followers, with enjoyment of bullying and regret, respectively, cited as reasons for these attributions.

With regard to moral attributions, worry was most often attributed to the victim: for fear of threat or harm from the bullies, for anticipation of future danger or harm from the bullies, for not knowing what to do, for not feeling welcome, for making the wrong impression, for feeling unsafe, and for getting into trouble. To a lesser extent, shame was also attributed to the victim: for the actual experience of being bullied, for offending the bullies, for feeling humiliated, for their appearance, for the choice of new school, and for not defending him- or herself. Participants most often attributed indifference (for perpetrating bullying behaviours, previous experience of bullying, for feeling “big” and “cool”, for finding bullying funny, for thinking it’s okay to bully for not knowing what they’re doing, for not knowing what it’s like to be bullied) and pride (for engagement in bullying, for being the leader, for feeling “cool”, for not caring, for smoking, for feeling victorious, for finding bullying funny, for not being the victim, for previous experience of bullying, and for thinking they will not get caught) to the bully. The follower’s emotions were mostly characterized



by worry (for fear of consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour, for not being fully engaged in the bullying, for feeling sorry for the victim, for anticipation of the continuation of the bullying, for the intensity of the bullying) and shame (for ambivalence regarding their participation in the bullying, for not really wanting to participate, for knowing bullying behaviour is wrong, as a form of protection, for being a part of the bully group, for knowing what it was like to be the victim). In stepping into the role of each of the characters in the hypothetical story, participants mostly cited worry in taking the role of the victim, shame and to a lesser extent worry in taking the role of the bully, and shame in taking the role of the follower, attributions similar to those attributed to the hypothetical victim and follower. On the other hand, when stepping into the role of the bully, participants attributed shame and worry to the self, attributions that contrasted with the emotions of pride and indifference previously ascribed to the hypothetical bully in the story.

Participants perceived that the victim would feel more worried in the blackmail vignette (for being physically threatened), the social isolation vignette (for anticipating that the bullying was going to get worse) and the real damage to personal possessions vignette (due to the consequences of the book being damaged); and more shame in the social isolation vignette (for being “all alone”), the group physical attack vignette (for falling over and feeling humiliated) and the blackmail vignette (for acquiescing to the bullies’ request). Participants perceived that the bullies would feel more pride in the real damage to personal possessions (for the victim’s books being cut up) and the group physical attack vignette (for the victim falling over with the group observing), and more indifferent in the neutral vignette (they have not yet started bullying the victim).



With regard to the considered use of coping strategies to address school bullying, seeking social support emerged as the preferred style of coping, with the majority of participants stating that in the event of being bullied they would tell an adult. The next most preferred coping strategies were directly addressing the bullies (“sorting things out”, making friends with the bullies) and avoidance (distancing, ignoring); least mentioned were finding other friends and verbal or physical retaliation. In relation to considered use of emotional release strategies to address school bullying, that is, what participants could think or say to themselves to make themselves feel better, analysis revealed a similar range of strategies to those identified for coping. Cognitive-based strategies (reframing, bolstering) emerged as the overall preferred emotional release strategy. The next preferred emotional release strategies were avoidance (distancing, ignoring) and seeking social support; least mentioned were finding other friends, wishful thinking, directly addressing the bullies, doing nothing and retaliation.

This chapter presented the results of a qualitative analysis of children’s understanding of emotional attributions and moral reasoning in relation to school bullying, and the coping strategies they might use to address bullying situations in school. Not only did this study confirm previous findings regarding general emotional and moral attributions to characters in a hypothetical bullying scenario and considered use of coping and emotional release strategies to address bullying, in examining the reasons behind participants’ emotional and moral attributions, this study revealed a rich and in-depth understanding of school bullying and peer relationships. For example, analysis demonstrated participants’ understanding of the ambiguous role of the follower in the bullying process. That participants were able

to articulate their understanding of school bullying within the context of their peer relationships prompted me to focus attention on a select number of interviews using the voice-centred relational method (Brown et al., 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Brown et al., 1989) in order to capture in greater detail the complexity of what they were telling me. I perceived that in adopting this method, developed originally to explore individual accounts of moral conflict, moral reasoning and the experience of self in relation to others, I would be better able to understand children's explanations of school bullying in terms of their interpersonal relationships. The next chapter presents the results of this analysis.

## CHAPTER 7

### Study 1 Results II

#### *7.1 Overview*

The overall aim of Study 1 was to engage children meaningfully as active participants in the research process in order to explore their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices. Specifically, this study had three key objectives:

- to explore children's emotional attributions and moral reasoning in relation to school bullying, and their causal understanding of the bullying relationship;
- to explore children's understanding of the role of the social group context in which school bullying takes place;
- to explore the coping strategies children consider using to address school bullying.

Since the results of the qualitative content analysis reported in Chapter 6 indicated children's rich insight regarding school bullying and peer relationships, I compiled detailed case studies for a number of participants to explore further their understanding of the role of the social group context within which school bullying takes place.

Data were analyzed using an adapted version of the voice-centred relational method (Brown et al., 1989; Brown et al., 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992) as outlined in



Chapter 5, Section 5.7.2, p. 186). The method revolved around a set of four readings of each interview transcript, in some cases while listening to the audio tape recording simultaneously. For the first reading, I read the transcript for a general understanding of what the participant was telling me, identifying the main events, the protagonists and the sub-plots, and for my reflexive response to the narrative. The second reading focused upon the voice of the self, the 'I', represented in the account including self in the role of the victim, bully and assistant. In the third and fourth readings, I listened to how participants spoke about their experiences of bullying in school in terms of their interpersonal relationships with others within the school setting. Specifically, the third reading focused upon concerns of care, responsibilities, interdependence and connection, whereas the fourth reading focused upon concerns of justice, rights, independence and autonomy.

The latter three readings involved a three-step process. First, I used coloured crayons to trace and underline certain statements in the transcripts that represented each reading, that is, the voices of the self (green), care (red) and justice (blue) (see Appendix S, p. 521, for an example). Second, after reading and underlining for self, care and justice concerns, I completed summary worksheets, documenting participants' voices in one column and my interpretative summaries in the other (see Appendix T, p. 533, for an example). Finally, based on the readings, I compiled case studies for each participant, reported below. In adapting this method, I removed my part in the dialogue and inserted words in brackets to augment missing information.

Since time restrictions meant it was impossible to conduct four readings with all of the participants, I concentrated such detailed attention on six cases, the selection of

which was based on a number of criteria. These included interviews that I found stimulating or challenging; interviews that seemed to illuminate the research aims; and interviews that provided a contrasting account to a previous participant (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). To protect participant confidentiality and maintain anonymity each case was assigned a pseudonym.

## 7.2 Case Studies

### 7.2.1 Annie's Account

#### 7.2.1.1 Reading 1: Reading for a general understanding.

For the first reading of the interview transcript, I paid attention to Annie's account of what was happening in the hypothetical story from the beginning to the end:

They're bullying this girl because she's in a slight way different to other people, they seem like, in every school you get a bunch of horrible people and they seem like them...she's getting teased and she's having her things taken off her and just, they're being horrible and she doesn't know what to do because she seems like a quiet girl 'cos she's not doing anything about it...they're cutting her hair off, they're trying to get her to steal money just like, and it seems to me they can't be bothered to do anything by themselves so they started doing this because, maybe at the beginning they were nice people, they started doing this because they needed like something and then now they just get pleasure out of it...they're bullying this girl because she's in a slight way different to other people...'cos people are really different, because maybe sometimes people just don't like them or they don't fit in or they [the bullies] don't think they're right to be part of the popular group and

they just put them into this group that's geeky...in every school you get a bunch of horrible people and they [the bullies] seem like them....

Annie describes the peer relationship portrayed in the hypothetical story in terms of a bullying relationship, characterizing the aggressive behaviours depicted as bullying behaviour. She explains that the new girl does not know how to defend herself "because she seems like a quiet girl", perceiving her as "not doing anything about it". Annie suggests that "maybe at the beginning" the group of bullies "were nice people", but they have teamed up with each other and started bullying because they needed something, and now get pleasure from inflicting such behaviour on others. Annie further states that bullying in school is caused by intolerance to individual difference.

Reading her account, Annie further details the nature of the relationships among the different members of the bully group. She attributes power to the bully group suggesting that they possess the wherewithal to manipulate friendships, and claims that such a group exists in every school. She suggests that, in general, one leader bully and two assistants perpetrate bullying. Annie advocates that long-term involvement in bullying others enables the bully to judge such behaviour as morally acceptable, as "they're powerful and they're popular". Moreover, she asserts that bullies get pleasure from inflicting harm on others. Although Annie maintains that a lot of the time the assistants "think the things that she (*leader bully*) does are out of order", they follow her orders for two reasons. First, they want to remain in the bully group as it makes them feel good and, second, they are afraid to challenge the bully's



behaviour. Furthermore, Annie also states that, “I know once you get into those groups it’s really hard to get out of them”.

In terms of moral reasoning and understanding others’ emotions, Annie perceives that the new girl feels scared and upset. She discloses that she has herself been a victim of bullying at her old school: “I’ve kind of been through it, that’s why I changed schools...It feels really upsetting, it’s really hard to get to sleep at night and you just feel like crying all the time and running away”. While she claims that the bullies feel nothing, she contradicts this statement later, suggesting that they would not only be feeling a little bit guilty, and indifferent, but also pride and pleasure. Furthermore, she perceives that the assistant bullies feel guilty particularly during the coercion, the attack on personal possessions and the group physical attack episodes. She further believes that the assistants think that the bully’s behaviour is morally wrong.

#### *7.2.1.2 Reading 2: Reading for self.*

In the second reading for “self”, I paid attention to Annie’s account and how she represented herself in the interview both in terms of Annie as new girl, and in terms of Annie stepping into the role of new girl, bully and observer. With regard to self as new girl, Annie states:

I’ve kind of been through it that’s why I changed schools...In my old school, and my brother’s school, that was in the last two years, it seems to have been us...it feels really upsetting, it’s really hard to get to sleep at night and you just feel like crying all the time, you feel like running away...when you’re in

a situation like that there's nothing that you can, that can make you feel better, you just, you try and make yourself feel better but there's *nothing* that can make you feel better at all.

Annie's personal experience of being bullied highlights the psychological and emotional consequences of victimization. Her account also draws attention to her feelings of hopelessness.

In contrast, in stepping into the role of the new girl portrayed in the hypothetical story, Annie says:

I think if I was the new girl I don't think I'd be the new girl for much longer... Well, I wouldn't be so shy about it I wouldn't let them push me around I'd sort of if they were being cheeky to me I'd be cheeky back because if they were telling me to smoke 'why don't you?' and stuff like that and in this picture (*social exclusion*) I wouldn't just go and hide I might run away but I wouldn't run away behind a tree I'd probably run away to the teacher and tell her.

From this perspective, two voices for self in the role of new girl emerge. First, Annie's account hints at leaving the school, which parallels her own experience. On the other hand, her account suggests that she would cope with the bullying more assertively. In putting herself into the role of the new girl, Annie cites a number of different coping strategies including retaliation, physical avoidance and seeking support from a teacher. Does Annie's account suggest that she would be more

assertive in the role of the new girl in the hypothetical story, or does she mean in comparison with her previous experience as a victim coping with bullying?

In stepping into the role of the bully, Annie states:

I don't think that I would ever be a bully though...yes [I would feel] very, very ashamed because we we're all different, if the world was all the same and we were all the same then it would be very boring...no [I couldn't feel proud] 'cos I wouldn't, I'd probably, if I was someone in this story that (*she points to the new girl*) would be me.

Thus, in contrast to her perception that the bullies in the hypothetical story would gain pleasure from bullying, Annie's account of self in the role of the bully suggests that she could not feel proud; rather she would feel ashamed for bullying someone who was different. In addition, Annie has difficulty conceiving of herself in the role of the bully.

In relation to self taking the role of the assistant bully, Annie asserts: "I'd be sort of trying to stop it and if not, I wouldn't be in that sort of group and, I know once you get into those groups it's really hard to get out of them". This statement suggests that while Annie would want to intervene on behalf of the new girl, she would be aware of the power and influence of the group and, Specifically, aware of the difficulty of moving from one friendship group to another.



### 7.2.1.3 Reading 3: Reading for care.

The third reading for interpersonal relationships in respect of care concerns draws attention to the harm caused by bullying behaviours and highlights matters of attachment and isolation:

They're cutting her hair off, they're trying to get her to steal money, just like, and it seems to me they can't be bothered to do anything by themselves so they started doing this...and then now they just get pleasure out of it...because maybe sometimes people just don't like them or they don't fit in or they don't think they're right to be part of the popular group and they just put them into this group that's geeky and then the person who's put in the geeky...and they just carrying on hurting them...[New girl feels] scared and upset and like an outsider and like she has no-one to talk to...It feels really upsetting it's really hard to get to sleep at night and you just feel like crying all the time you feel like running away...I'd be sort of trying to stop it [if I was watching]...I know once you get into those groups it's really hard to get out of them...I think the reason these two might do something is because they wanna stay in that group 'cos they think it makes them great and everything, but really everyone just hates them...she (*leader bully*) looks all cheeky and smirky in that one she looks smirky number 7 (*group physical attack*)...and in that one she looks quite spiteful...Her [the bully is feeling proud] because she gets pleasure I think out of doing this to people it's just some people get pleasure out of hurting other people...Once someone's turned against you like that it's almost impossible to get them to like you...I think the most likely [ending] would be that one (*new girl alone*), or it might be this (*peer*

*support*), Number 2 (*new girl alone*) then Number 3 (*peer support*) because it might be that girl (*peer*) finds her sitting behind the tree and then she comes and takes her off the wall.

This reading directs attention to Annie's knowledge of peer relationships and psychological processes in the bullying process, knowledge she suggests is drawn from her personal experience of being victimized. In particular, she mentions on several occasions the pleasure gained by the bullies from bullying the new girl, suggesting a lack of care toward the newcomer. Focusing on care concerns, Annie's account highlights peer relationships in terms of attachment and detachment issues both with reference to the new girl's disconnection and isolation from her peers, and paradoxically in terms of the sense of connection among members of the bully group. Additionally, Annie's account stresses the nature of the assistants' attachment to the bully group. First, they participate in bullying because they want to remain connected to the bully group and, second, because they perceive that it increases their personal status. Annie's account also focuses on the negative psychological and emotional effects of the bullying on the new girl and, putting herself in the role of observer, her desire to intervene. Given Annie's focus on the new girl's isolation and disconnection, it is not surprising that she selects the pessimistic outcome for the most probable ending to the hypothetical story, that is, the new girl hides herself behind the tree.

#### *7.2.1.4 Reading 4: Reading for justice.*

In the fourth reading, Annie's account focuses on violations of fairness and issues of moral choice:

They're bullying this girl because she's in a slight way different to other people...'Cos people are really different because maybe sometimes people just don't like them or they don't fit in or they don't think they're right to be part of the popular group and they just put them into this group that's geeky...they're just being horrible to her because she's in a slight, very slight way different...they're making fun of her because she's a bit different, I mean *they're* different to her, but she doesn't question that...because maybe something's happened in their [the bully's] life when they were younger or maybe they have their parents and they just don't know that that's the wrong thing to do...they (*the assistants*) are saying 'what's she doing?'...And so that's what usually happens one leader and then they're the two other people and then they are just a lot of the time think the things that she does are out of order...I think the reason these two [assistants] might do something is because they wanna stay in that group 'cos they think it makes them great and everything but really everyone just hates them...I think these two [assistants] just get barked orders at by her and they're too scared to question it...they're making fun of her because she's a bit different I mean *they're* different to her but she doesn't question that...[the bully's feeling okay] because she's the one that's doing it and people who usually get into the habit of doing things like this they just think it's alright to do it 'cos they're powerful and they're popular and they just think it's alright to do stuff like this to them...if they were being cheeky to me I'd be cheeky back because if they were telling me to smoke 'why don't you?' and stuff like that...



From a justice perspective, Annie considers it unfair that “geeky” children are treated differently to “popular” children. She also considers that the bullies have violated conventional rules of fairness, that is, you do not bully others just because they are different. Although Annie perceives that the leader bully participates in such behaviour because she is powerful and popular, she suggests that the bully is unaware that such behaviour is wrong.

In relation to the assistants, there are two voices emerging: one that reflects what they would like to do (challenge the bully) and one that seems to be informed by what they actually do (go along with the bully). While the assistants consider that the bully has violated the morally acceptable norms of behaviour, they are afraid to challenge her, as they fear exclusion from the popular group. Annie describes their moral dilemma in terms of awareness that the bully’s behaviour is wrong on the one hand, but choosing to remain silent on the other. By remaining silent, the assistants avoid detachment from the popular group. Overall, Annie’s moral concerns pertain to not hurting or harming others. However, in taking the role of the new girl Annie considers that being cheeky to the bullies as a form of coping strategy is justifiable when they have previously been cheeky to the new girl.

#### *7.2.1.5 Summary.*

In reading for bullying in school in terms of interpersonal relationships, Annie uses moral language to explain and justify its presence, and expresses her account using both justice and care concerns. In her account, Annie describes the negative effects of bullying upon the physical and emotional well-being of the new girl. From a care perspective, this awareness of the negative consequences of bullying for the new girl

can explain Annie's desire for herself as observer in the hypothetical story to intervene. The self-disclosure of her own long-term experience of victimization provides evidence that a care orientation is present in her account. Equally, evidence for justice concerns is also present. Annie presents an in-depth understanding of peer group dynamics in terms of what it is about those who bully and their social context that may lead them to engage in aggressive behaviours towards others. In addition, she describes inclusion and exclusion strategies employed by bullies to manipulate the social context as a function of the membership of different peer groups, such as "the popular group" and "the geeky group".

Reading for interpersonal relationships reflects the evidence that two moral orientations are present in Annie's account and, at times, certain phrases can provide evidence for either perspective. For example, "...because maybe sometimes people just don't like them or they don't fit in or they don't think they're right to be part of the popular group and they just put them into this group that's geeky..." can refer either to the abandonment of the new girl (care orientation), or to the unfairness of treatment of geeky children as compared with popular children (justice orientation). Furthermore, "...I think the reason these two might do something is because they wanna stay in that group 'cos they think it makes them great and everything but really everyone just hates them" can allude either to a sense of attachment and belonging among members of the bully group (care orientation), or to the sense of power experienced by being a member of the bully group (justice orientation). Reading for care, the reader could assume that these statements reflect her observations of the new girl's experiences of isolation and oppression. Then again,



reading for justice, Annie's statements indicate an involved understanding of group membership and social processes within the bullying process.

### *7.2.2 Mustafa's Account*

#### *7.2.2.1 Reading 1: Reading for a general understanding.*

For the first reading of Mustafa's interview transcript, I paid attention to his account of what was happening in the hypothetical story from the beginning to the end:

What is happening he's a new kid I think and he's lonely and them three bully him and take his private stuff and rip his homework and they bully someone else and they pinch and punch him and they bully someone else cut their hair and he's scared of them and he went next to the tree and so they can't find him... Well, his (new boy) bag's been taken by the bullies... He's getting pinched like that... They just went like that and not allowing him to get out of the room... Bullying someone else... Bullying someone else... They're trying to find him.

In this reading, Mustafa describes the peer relationship portrayed in the hypothetical story in terms of a bullying relationship, characterizing the aggressive behaviours depicted as bullying behaviours. He suggests that the bullies engage in bullying behaviours because they "never had a good life that's why they bully someone else...so they can make life worse for them". Although, a possible contradiction in Mustafa's account is his sense that the bullies' parents "treated them nice the bullies nice and all that" which is why he describes them as "angry or like they're hard-tempered".



Reading Mustafa's account draws attention to details about the nature of friendships and about the nature of the relationships among the bullies. For example, on arrival at the school, the new boy anticipated new friendships, "he thought they were like nice boys...and he wanted to be friends...and he waited to get the chance".

However, the bullies started calling him names, "...he got called like 'short pants' or something...that's how it started...", which led to the new boy experiencing a sense of not belonging to the school. While he states that all three boys engage in bullying the new boy, Mustafa alludes to a hierarchy of bullies with the tall dark character acting as the main bully, assisted by the blonde boy and the short boy. For example, he describes the assistant bullies as feeling more proud during the blackmail episode because the main bully is not depicted in this vignette and the other two "got the chance" to blackmail the new boy. Furthermore, he suggests that the bullies think that engaging in bullying behaviour is "funny" and "a joke". At the bottom of the hierarchy is the short assistant bully who is not only characterized as an apprentice "...learning something from the bullies", but also as another target: "...he's another one getting bullied and that".

In respect of moral reasoning and understanding others' emotions, Mustafa discloses that as a new boy in a previous school he was bullied which left him feeling "Angry...and scared...and I got fed up with them I'll get angry with them and they leave me". He observes that the new boy in the hypothetical story feels scared, afraid and lonely. Furthermore, Mustafa perceives that the new boy feels worried in anticipation of being bullied. He feels more worried in the social isolation episode because he is afraid and during the blackmail episode because he has seen one boy taking money from another boy. On several occasions, he describes the new boy as

ashamed for not defending himself, in particular, for remaining unresponsive to the bullying stating, for example, "...and now he's really ashamed because he couldn't like stop it he just watched him cut up his homework". Similarly, in stepping into the role of the new boy, Mustafa claims that he would feel ashamed for not addressing the bullying behaviour. In contrast, Mustafa states that, if he were the new boy, he would not feel worried; rather he would "be brave and all that and tell".

According to Mustafa's account, the three bullies are feeling okay about their bullying behaviour since they are not the ones on the receiving end. Mustafa observes that in the real damage to personal possessions and coercion episodes the blonde assistant bully feels more okay "Because they do something to him. They think it's alright". The bullies also feel proud of bullying the new boy given that they think, "it's like a joke or something". Furthermore, in the blackmail episode the two assistant bullies feel more proud for stealing the money because "that boy (*main bully*) went somewhere and both of them got the chance". On the other hand, Mustafa suggests that the short assistant bully feels a little ashamed because "...he's another one getting bullied and that".

#### 7.2.2.2 *Reading 2: Reading for self.*

In the second reading for "self", I paid attention to Mustafa's account of how he presented himself in his interview transcript both in terms of Mustafa as new boy, and in terms of Mustafa taking the role of the new boy and the bullies in the hypothetical story. In relation to self as new boy, Mustafa declares:

Angry all the way like stop it step on them like make them and all that scared 'cos like last time I went to a new school and all that there were bullies and I got fed up with them I'll get angry with them and they leave me...and I told the teacher...Then my mum 'cos I'm not scared of them what's the point of being scared of them they will make it worse.

Mustafa's personal experience of being bullied highlights his emotional response, that is, anger and fear, and his choice of coping strategies, that is, expressing anger towards the bullies and seeking adult social support. While on the one hand Mustafa states that he was scared of the bullies, he later asserts, "I'm not scared of them", claiming that if he had shown the bullies he was afraid of them it would make the bullying worse.

This parallels Mustafa's account of stepping into the role of new boy who would "be brave and all that and tell...". Indeed, in taking the role of the new boy if Mustafa asserts:

I would step up first I would see what they do and make sure they don't see me then I'd tell the head teacher and the teacher and if the teacher doesn't do anything I would tell the head teacher and the head teacher and I would tell my mum and then they would get in trouble...First I'd see what they do and make sure they don't see me.

In terms of what Mustafa would do to address the bullying if he was the new boy, he offers a strategic approach, that is, he would covertly observe the bullies' behaviour



and, subsequently, adopt an adult social support strategy, telling his head teacher, his teacher and his mum. Mustafa perceives that if he tells someone, the bullies will experience the consequences of their behaviour. His account also alludes to awareness that breakdown in behaviour management practice at school is a possibility stating that: "...if the teacher doesn't do anything I would tell the head teacher...". In terms of what he would say to himself if he was the new boy in the hypothetical story to make himself feel better he says, "Don't be chicken be brave", suggesting that not standing up to the bullying is being cowardly. Although this view of self as new boy contrasts with his observation that the new boy is feeling ashamed for not doing anything about the bullying, that is, "Cos I wouldn't like step up".

In terms of stepping into the role of the bully, Mustafa maintains that he would feel, "I'm gonna be stronger than him and all that and then I'm going to bully everyone in the whole world", suggesting wishful thinking in terms of a desire for power and domination. In taking the role of the assistant bully Mustafa asserts that "I'd feel, like this never happened but, like I'm learning something from the bullies", suggesting an apprentice-like role. Furthermore, self as assistant bully could feel proud in the blackmail episode either for blaming the other assistant bully or for the financial gain.

#### *7.2.2.3 Reading 3: Reading for care.*

The third reading for care draws attention to Mustafa's concerns about isolation and disconnection and highlights his awareness of the harm caused by bullying behaviours:

...and he's lonely and them three bully him and take his private stuff and rip his homework and they bully someone else and they pinch and punch him and they bully someone else cut their hair and he's scared of them and he went next to the tree and so they can't find him...[New boy feels] scared, afraid, lonely...'cos no-one's being his friend and all that...Like he (*short boy*) thinks it's funny... Yeah...'Cos look at his face happy and all that...[Worried] 'cos he might get bullied...More worried? The last one...'Cos he's like afraid he's hiding behind the tree like that...That new boy's ashamed 'cos he can't like step up and say 'leave me alone'...The little boy a tiny little bit I think he's like feeling ashamed because he's another one getting bullied and that...More ashamed? Here (*real damage to personal possessions*)... Yeah because that boy ripped his homework and now he's really ashamed because he couldn't like stop it he just watched him cut up his homework... Yeah if I was him yeah [I could feel ashamed]...'Cos I wouldn't like step up...They're (*the bullies*) feeling okay because they bully him all the time everyday the first time he came he thought they were like nice boys and all of that and he wanted to be friends but, and he waited to get the chance, but he got called 'short pants' or something, I don't know, that's how it started he didn't feel like he's belonging to the school...The three of them [bullies feel proud]...They think it's like a joke or something...That's why they feeling proud and all that...I think that's the first one (*points to new boy remaining alone*)... Yeah, and he's [new boy] like scared and he told I think his parent or I don't know parents and got a friend a new friend and they (*bullies*) got told, they said sorry and they played with him.

In this reading, Mustafa's account draws attention to the sense of isolation and disconnection experienced by the new boy. Mustafa intimates that on arrival at the school the new boy anticipated attachment and connection in terms of new friendships, although, the chance to make new friends was not forthcoming. Rather, the bullying started with name-calling and consequently the new boy feels detached from the school. Furthermore, Mustafa's account highlights the new boy's lack of responsiveness to the bullying. This reading also highlights Mustafa's care orientation in terms of the negative psychological and emotional effects of the bullying upon the new boy, that is, the new boy feels "scared, afraid, lonely". Indeed, the new boy chooses to isolate himself from everyone by hiding behind the tree in response to his fear of the bullies. Furthermore, Mustafa's account draws attention to the notion that the bullies gain pleasure from bullying the new boy. He asserts that the bullies think that engaging in such behaviour is funny or "a joke".

#### *7.2.2.4 Reading 4: Reading for justice.*

In the fourth reading, Mustafa's account primarily focuses on transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour and avenging previous situations of unfairness:

...he's (*new boy*) scared of them...they just went like that not allowing him to get out of the room...because the bullies never had a good life that's why they bully someone else...so they can make life worse for them...[If I was the new boy] I'm gonna be stronger than him and all that and then I'm going to bully everyone in the whole world...[They feel more okay in real damage to personal possessions and coercion episodes] because they do something to



him. They think it's alright...he's (*new boy*) got the right to like step up and all that...I would step up, first I would see what they do and make sure they don't see me then I'd tell the head teacher and the teacher and if the teacher doesn't do anything I would tell the head teacher and the head teacher, I would tell my mum then they would get in trouble...and they (*the bullies*) got told, they said 'sorry', and they played with him (*new boy*).

In justice terms, Mustafa considers that the bullies use bullying of others to rectify previous unfair treatment that they themselves have experienced. In turn, he believes that the new boy's response to the bullying, that is, "stepping up" is acceptable in terms of avenging the bullies' transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour. His account also suggests an understanding of school policy and practice regarding bullying, that is, after seeking adult social support he believes that the bullies will be sanctioned and required to apologize. Furthermore, in putting himself in the role of the main bully Mustafa's justice voice draws attention to transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour with regard to issues of coercive and dominating conduct. In terms of the assistant bullies, Mustafa's orientation draws attention to their not knowing that bullying is wrong.

#### 7.2.2.5 *Summary.*

In reading Mustafa's experiences of bullying in school in terms of interpersonal relationships, his account focuses predominantly on issues of care. Specifically, his statements reflect his observations of the new boy's experiences of disconnection and isolation. His account suggests that while the new boy anticipated connection and attachment in the form of new friendships, these were not forthcoming. Rather, the

new boy experienced name-calling, which signalled the start of the bullying and latterly he feels detached from the school. Indeed, Mustafa thinks the most probable ending to the story is the new boy hiding himself behind the tree. Conversely, at the end of his account Mustafa suggests that the situation might be resolved through new friendships and attachments. His self-disclosure of his own experience of being bullied provides evidence for a moral orientation of care in his account. Mustafa's account also highlights the negative psychological and emotional effects of the bullying upon the new boy, that is, the new boy feels "scared, afraid, lonely". Indeed, Mustafa understands that, in response to his fear of the bullies, the new boy has chosen to isolate himself from everyone by hiding behind the tree. Furthermore, Mustafa's moral orientation of care stresses the new boy's lack of responsiveness to the bullying behaviours, for example, "That new boy's ashamed 'cos he can't like step up and say 'leave me alone'".

On the other hand, evidence for justice concerns is also present, that is, Mustafa's account focuses on a sense of rectifying or avenging a situation of unfairness of treatment. Thus, Mustafa considers that the bullies use bullying of others to rectify previous unfair treatment that they themselves have experienced. In turn, he believes that the new boy has "got the right" to rectify the violation of social norms of behaviour by "stepping up". Furthermore, Mustafa is aware of school policy and practice regarding bullying, referring to the negative consequences of bullying for the bullies, although he is also cognizant of the infallibility of behaviour management practices, that is, "...if the teacher doesn't do anything I would tell the head teacher...". In putting himself in the role of the main bully, Mustafa's account draws

attention to power issues, while in terms of the assistant bullies, his justice voice focuses on their lack of knowing that bullying is wrong.

### 7.2.3 *Freema's Account*

#### 7.2.3.1 *Reading 1: Reading for a general understanding.*

For the first reading of the interview transcript, I attended to Freema's account of what she perceived was happening in the hypothetical story from the beginning to the end:

The girls are bullying her (*new girl*) and they're like cutting up her books and stuff and they're threatening her to smoke and they're saying to her like steal money and um they're teasing her about her school uniform because she's not the same as them...She's getting blocked by the two girls...She's um they're all they're um bullying her...She's hiding from the girls because she's hiding from the girls in case they start bullying her some more again...They're all ganging up like they're all together and they're um picking on her because of her school uniform they're laughing at her 'cos they're all the same apart from her...They're pushing her over and all her books dropped out and they're laughing at her...They're trying to get her to smoke.

In this reading, Freema describes the peer relationship depicted in the hypothetical story in terms of a bullying relationship, characterizing the aggressive behaviours depicted as bullying behaviour and on several occasions refers to the group of bullies as a 'gang'. She asserts that the tall dark girl and the blonde girl are the main bullies, with the short girl acting as assistant. Then again, later in the account, she suggests



that the tall dark girl is the main bully with the blonde girl and the short girl as assistants. What appears at first to be a contradiction in Freema's account may suggest that she perceives the roles within the bully group as changeable. Indeed, in response to the question "Do you think that something might have happened before this to cause this to happen?" Freema suggests that the new girl, along with her own gang, had previously bullied the bullies who at that time did not have a gang of their own. Although, she also asserts that bullying in school may be attributable to the bullies' jealousy of the new girl, "for being more nicer to other people", with the aim of victimization being to lower the new girl's self-esteem. Due to the intimidating and coercive behaviour of the bullies, Freema considers that the new girl would feel upset "Because everywhere she goes like she sees the girls there and they're always picking on her and telling her to do things that she doesn't want to do".

Reading Freema's account, she further details the nature of the roles within the bully group. The blonde girl, in her role as bully, is attributed with happiness owing to the popularity gained from bullying others. Power is also ascribed to this character as a result of having "...a little gang around her..." and her ability to coerce others into behaving aggressively. While the blonde bully (sometimes identified as an assistant) would feel proud for having her own gang, equally she would feel worried during the real damage to personal possessions episode in case the new girl retaliates or tells someone. Along with the tall dark bully, she would feel ashamed for being the one who is mainly bullying the new girl. Furthermore, these two would feel more ashamed during the attack on personal possessions episode, according to Freema. Despite feeling ashamed, Freema suggests that the tall dark bully would feel okay because she wants to continue with the bullying and she would feel more okay

during the social exclusion episode because she is behaving as if nothing has happened. In putting herself into the role of the bully, Freema would feel ashamed because she knows that bullying is wrong; she would also feel ashamed and upset in the event that the bullies abandoned her or she became their next target.

While she suggests that the assistant supports and encourages the bullies, she also asserts that the assistant is not much involved in perpetrating the bullying behaviours. Whereas Freema believes that the assistant bully would feel worried for encouraging and supporting the bullies, she maintains that the assistant would also feel proud for being partially involved in the bullying; she would feel most proud in the teasing episode. Freema claims that the assistant takes part in the bullying both as a form of protection from isolation and as a form of protection from victimization by the bullies. Furthermore, Freema's account draws the reader's attention to the assistant bully's pleasure gained from participation in bullying the new girl.

#### *7.2.3.2 Reading 2: Reading for self.*

In the second reading for "self", I paid attention to Freema's representation of her self in taking the role of the new girl, the bully and the assistant bully. In taking the role of the new girl in the hypothetical story, Freema states:

I would feel upset and scared...Because like they'll be bullying me and trying to get me to do things that I don't want to do when I have to do it just to not get hurt...Well I would um I would um I wouldn't stand there like she does and not say anything. I would um I wouldn't tell my teacher at first I'd see how it goes on and then I maybe if it gets too bad I might just say something



to them like I don't know I might just try to be more make it like I'm not scared of them and I try to make myself more walk away and if they do something like make me smoke or something then I would tell the teachers or whoever's outside...I'd think to myself that maybe they're just bullying me 'cos they're jealous or maybe they're bullying me 'cos I'm more nicer to other people and I'm not bullying them and they want to be more like me so they're bullying me trying to make me not very big.

From this perspective, Freema maintains that she would feel upset and scared owing to the intimidating and coercive behaviour of the bullies. However, she would comply with their demands in order to avoid harm. In terms of addressing the bullying behaviours, Freema would be more assertive than the new girl portrayed in the vignettes. She would assess the situation and "...if it gets too bad..." (how bad does it have to get?), apply a number of strategies, including confronting the bullies, bolstering her self-image, physically avoiding the bullies and "...if they do something like make me smoke or something..." she would tell a teacher or other adult. To make herself feel better, Freema as new girl would tell herself that the bullies are bullying her because they are jealous and want something that she has.

In stepping into the role of the bullies, Freema asserts:

I wouldn't feel very good 'cos I wouldn't like to pick on someone because I know how it feels when I get picked on... Yeah [I could feel worried]  
Because once I did it I'd think 'oh I shouldn't have did that now because then I'll get in trouble and like maybe she will get a gang a bigger gang than I've



got and she will start bullying us'... Yeah [I could feel ashamed] Because I know that it's wrong to do it and I know that I wouldn't like it myself if I was that little girl there... No I wouldn't [feel okay] no I'd feel very ashamed and upset because in case these girls leave me and I'm all on my own and I get picked on as well... No [I couldn't be feeling proud] Because I wouldn't like to bully anyone 'cos I don't like it when they bully me...

Freema's account demonstrates her use of the first person in talking about self as bully. For example, when talking about how she would feel if she were the bully Freema spoke about 'I': "I wouldn't like to pick on someone because I know how it feels when I get picked on". Interestingly, when talking about whether she could feel proud if she was the bully Freema replied in terms of 'I' saying, "No... Because I wouldn't like to bully anyone 'cos I don't like it when they bully me". Furthermore, in taking the role of the bully, Freema could feel worried about the consequences of bullying the new girl both in terms of punishment and in terms of retaliation from the new girl, and ashamed as she knows that such behaviour is wrong.

Stepping into the role of the assistant bully, Freema says:

I would feel I wouldn't feel very big about myself like I'd feel really small and not a very nice person to pick on someone or I'll have a lot of friends... Um I'd feel not too good about myself I wouldn't want to pick on her but I'd just do it so I wouldn't get picked on as well by these girls...

Freema suggests that she would not feel good about herself for bullying the new girl, indeed, would not want to participate. Nevertheless, she would do so in order to avoid being the target of bullying, and to avoid abandonment by the bullies.

### 7.2.3.3 *Reading 3: Reading for care.*

The third reading for care draws attention to attachment issues and demonstrates Freema's awareness of the harm caused by bullying behaviour:

She's (*new girl*) hiding from the girls because she's hiding from the girls in case they start bullying her some more again...They're all ganging up like they're all together and they're um picking on her because of her school uniform they're laughing at her 'cos they're all the same apart from her...They're pushing her over and all her books dropped out and they're laughing at her...I think maybe um she might have been like she might have had a gang with her before and then they left her and then now she was being rude to them girls and they didn't have a gang then and then now the gang left her and then now they're getting revenge to her 'cos of what she did to them...Maybe [the new girl feels] upset...Because everywhere she goes like she sees the girls there and they're always picking on her and telling her to do things that she doesn't want to do...I would feel upset and scared...Because like they'll be bullying me and trying to get me to do things that I don't want to do when I have to do it just to not get hurt...she's [blonde bully] feeling very happy with herself because she's like feeling like I'm oh bullying her and I'm popular 'cos I'm bullying her...Um I'd not feel too good about myself I wouldn't want to pick on her but I'd just do it so I wouldn't get

picked on as well by these girls...Um I think that the little one there is worried because she's not really doing much she's just laughing and stuff and I think that she thinks like I'm not going to really get involved in it that much I'm just going to laugh about it and say things to her because she's not that big herself...[Feeling more worried] Um here (*pointing to attack on personal possessions*) because she's hiding sort of she's not showing herself like them two are she's hiding behind her...[Bully is feeling okay] because she's carrying on like being horrible to her she's carrying on making her do things when the others are trying to like stop...[Bully feels more okay in social exclusion] because she's just acting she's just skipping she's just acting like nothing's happened and nothing's been going on she's just carrying on just acting like nothing's been happening...No I wouldn't [feel okay if I was one of those girls] no I'd feel very ashamed and upset because in case these girls leave me and I'm all on my own and I get picked on as well...This little short one [feels proud] in no 9 (*blackmail*) 'cos she's just giggling and smirking and just thinking 'oh my God I'm so glad what I've done' 'cos she doesn't really do anything much...[She's feeling more proud in teasing episode] because she's got that little she's got those little eyes all just smirking and she just doesn't look very she doesn't look kind of worried like the two big girls do she's like smirking...Because she's got a little gang around her...This one no 1 (*points to optimistic ending*).

In this reading, Freema's account draws attention to the sense of attachment and connection among members of the bully group in terms of gang membership and the sense of protection from abandonment and isolation that membership of such a group



offers. It would seem that membership of the bully group is more important to Freema than observation of norms and standards of social behaviour. Thus, while Freema's account briefly focuses on the negative emotional consequences of bullying for the new girl, and the new girl's need to comply with the bullies' requests in order to protect herself, her account is predominantly concerned with the role of the bullies, in particular the assistant bullies.

Whereas Freema's account draws attention to the role of the small assistant in terms of encouraging and supporting the bullies it also alludes to a lack of involvement with the bullying, highlighting the nature of the assistant's attachment to the bully group. Perhaps this distancing from the bullying process makes it possible for the assistant to remain friends with the bullies, and to take a step back from the situation, enabling her to ignore the new girl's distress. Indeed, Freema voices the small assistant's ambivalence regarding her connection with the bully group, that is, Freema perceives that the assistant participates in the bullying both as a form of defence against isolation from the bully group and as a form of protection from victimization by the main bullies. That said, Freema does suggest at one point that the assistant bullies are trying to stop the main bully. While Freema's account focuses on disconnection and lack of involvement, interestingly her choice of probable ending for the hypothetical story is the optimistic ending, that is, the children playing together, which suggests a desire for inclusion and equality.

#### 7.2.3.4 Reading 4: Reading for justice.

In the final reading, Freema's account focuses the reader's attention on transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, violations of fairness and justification for bullying:

...they're threatening her (*the new girl*) to smoke and they're saying to her like steal money and um they're teasing her about her uniform because she's not the same as them...They're all ganging up like they're all together and they're um picking on her because of her school uniform they're laughing at her 'cos they're all the same apart from her...They're trying to get her to smoke...I think maybe um she might have been like she might have had a gang with her before and then they left her and then now she was being rude to them girls and they didn't have a gang then and then now the gang left her and then now they're getting revenge to her 'cos of what she did to them...Because everywhere she (*new girl*) goes like she sees the girls there and they're always picking on her and telling her to do things that she doesn't want to do...Because like they'll be bullying me and trying to get me to do things that I don't want to do when I have to do it just to not get hurt...Um I think that the little one there is worried because she's not really doing much she's just laughing and stuff and I think that she thinks like I'm not going to really get involved in it that much I'm just going to laugh about it and say things to her because she's not that big herself...That one there (*blonde one*) [might feel worried] because she's got scissors and she knows that she's (*new girl*) seen her cut up her work so she's feeling worried in case she tries to do something to her or tells of her...[I could feel worried] because once I did it

I'd think 'oh I shouldn't have did that now because then I'll get into trouble and like maybe she will get a gang a bigger gang than I've got and she will start bullying us'...they're (*the bullies*) just sitting quiet like because they know what they've done so they're sitting more quietly 'cos they don't want to get themselves in more trouble...[I would feel ashamed] because I know that it's wrong to do it...Because she's (*tall dark girl*) carrying on like being horrible to her she's carrying on making her do things when the others are trying to like stop...Because she's (*blonde bully*) got a little gang around her and she's like 'well, if I...' she's like thinking 'I can't believe I just did that I cut up her work and that and made her do this and I can make anyone do it if I can make her do it' she's thinking that in her head.

In terms of transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, Freema's account suggests that the bullies' behaviour is oppressive and coercive, and she draws attention to the main bully's sense of power and authority. Furthermore, Freema's account draws attention to violations of fairness in terms of the bullies taking advantage of perceived inequalities in appearance. Her account, however, predominantly focuses on justification for bullying behaviour. Freema perceives that the bullies' behaviour is justified and supported since they were reacting to provocation by the new girl: "...they're getting their revenge to her 'cos of what she did to them". The small assistant's behaviour is justified and supported: "...because she's not really doing much...I'm not going to really get involved in it that much...", suggesting that partial involvement in the bullying behaviour is acceptable. Such limited involvement in bullying might be construed by the assistant bully as acceptable, but at what point does engaging in bullying behaviour become morally



wrong? Furthermore, from a justice perspective Freema principally focuses upon the negative consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour for the bullies. Freema perceives that the bullies are more concerned with their engagement in bullying in terms of the consequences to themselves, than they are of the harm caused to the new girl. Specifically, the bullies are concerned with avoiding punishment and avoiding retaliation from the new girl, suggesting an awareness of what the repercussions are for bullying another and concern for self.

#### *7.2.3.5 Summary.*

In reading for bullying in school in terms of interpersonal relationships, Freema uses moral language to explain and justify its presence, and expresses her account in both justice and care concerns. The reader's attention is drawn to matters of inclusion and attachment, both characteristics of a care orientation. Equally, Freema's account suggests that she is cognizant of transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, issues of fairness and concerns of justice. However, while Freema focuses on issues of group membership from a care perspective, from a justice orientation she justifies and supports bullying as an acceptable means of retribution.

Reading for interpersonal relationships reflects support for the presence of two moral voices in Freema's account and, at times, certain phrases can provide evidence for either perspective. For example, "I think maybe um she might have been like she might have had a gang with her before and then they left her and then now she was being rude to them girls and they didn't have a gang then and then now the gang left her and then now they're getting revenge to her 'cos of what she did to them" can either refer to the sense of attachment and connection among members of the bully

group (care orientation) or to the notion of avenging a previous wrong-doing (justice orientation). Moreover, “Um I think that the little one there is worried because she’s not really doing much she’s just laughing and stuff and I think that she thinks like I’m not going to really get involved in it that much I’m just going to laugh about it and say things to her because she’s not that big herself” can either refer to the assistant’s lack of involvement and disconnection from the bullying behaviour (care orientation) or to justification for bullying behaviour in terms of limited involvement (justice orientation). Reading for care, Freema’s account mainly reflects concern for relationships and the welfare of others within the bully group. Furthermore, reading from a justice perspective, Freema’s statements indicate a concern for fairness of treatment in terms of justification for the bullying behaviour.

#### 7.2.4 *Karin’s Account*

##### 7.2.4.1 *Reading 1: Reading for a general understanding.*

For the first reading of the interview transcript, I paid attention to Karin’s account of what was happening in the hypothetical story from the beginning to the end:

Well basically there’s this new girl that comes into school and um she’s a new girl and she’s pretty shy and stuff and so there’s three other girls that are bullying her kind of to threatening and stuff so she um she says she wants to join in with a game with them she will need to do some skipping but they wouldn’t let her and then they were looking at her dress and teasing over her dress and she was leaving to go home from school and one child stopped her from going home and during the other day at playtime she um they took her bag off of her and then they started cutting them up and then she um then the



other children she fell down and then the other children just walked away the three other children and then um and then the three girls are holding one of the girls were holding a cigarette telling her to smoke it but she didn't want to but you could see in the picture she didn't want to and then they were threatening her to steal money from another child in school so she was hiding behind a tree away from the other children in the playground that were bullying her.

Karin describes the peer relationship depicted in the hypothetical story in terms of a bullying relationship, characterizing the aggressive behaviours portrayed as bullying behaviour. She states that the tall dark girl is the main bully and, after consideration, she categorizes the blonde girl as such as well. The short dark girl emerges from the account as a reinforcer in terms of providing positive encouragement to the bullies. While Karin does not know why these behaviours happen in school, she perceives that the bullies started teasing the new girl due to her difference.

In terms of what was happening to the new girl in the hypothetical story, Karin's account focuses on her desire to make new friends. Furthermore, her account highlights the notion that the new girl does not know what to do in response to the bullying. In contrast, Karin states that if she were the new girl, to change the situation she would: "...ignore them but it would be hard but I would tell the teacher I wouldn't stand this getting upset...And go and make friends with another nice pair of people instead of bullies". Interestingly, however, Karin selects the pessimistic outcome for the most probable ending to the hypothetical story, that is, the new girl hiding herself behind the tree.



Reading Karin's account highlights her focus on the main bullies' fear of the consequences of bullying the new girl, such as punishment or reprimand. For example, she states, "I think the big one [is feeling ashamed]...Because she's did all them things to her and she don't really want to get in trouble...". Karin's account also highlights the notion of self-reflection, a characteristic ascribed to both the tall dark bully and to self in taking the role of bully. For example, Karin thinks that the tall dark bully "...is mainly worried in number 10 (*social isolation*) because she thinks back to what all the things she did". In putting herself into the role of the bully, Karin states, "...I would think back to what I did and I would wanna say sorry but I don't think the other girl would say 'that's okay' because all the really bad things I did".

In terms of the short dark bully's involvement in the bullying, Karin demonstrates awareness of her involvement during the bullying episodes as a reinforcer to the bullies. While she suggests that the short dark girl has "...mainly not did any of it...", by being present during the bullying episodes, that is, "...just like standing and looking and stuff..." and by laughing, Karin perceives that she "joins in" with the bullying.

With regard to moral reasoning and understanding others' emotions, Karin perceives that because the new girl is being bullied and threatened she is feeling small inside and sad. She also suggests that the new girl would feel worried, upset and uncertain about how to address the bullying. Karin asserts that the new girl is more worried in the blackmail episode because she thinks that the bullies are going to cut her hair off, in the coercion episode because she does not want to smoke, and in the social

isolation episode in anticipation that worse behaviour will follow. In putting herself in the role of the new girl, Karin states that she would feel upset and desire to stay away from school. She would also feel worried and not know what to do in response to the bullying.

In relation to the bullies, Karin states that they would feel worried in anticipation that they would be reprimanded for their behaviour. Moreover, the tall dark bully would feel scared in anticipation of the consequences of bullying the new girl, and ashamed for her behaviour. The blonde bully would also feel ashamed for what she has done to the new girl, especially for cutting off the new girl's hair in the blackmail episode. Putting herself in the role of the bully, Karin would feel ashamed and want to apologize to the new girl, following reflection upon her negative behaviour. With regard to the reinforcer bully, Karin asserts that this character is feeling okay because she is laughing and has not participated in the bullying. Furthermore, according to Karin, the reinforcer bully feels more okay in the neutral episode and the social exclusion episode because the bullying has not yet begun. In addition, the reinforcer bully could feel proud of what the other bullies have done, according to Karin's account, because she has not taken part herself. She could feel more proud in the coercion episode.

#### *7.2.4.2 Reading 2: Reading for self.*

In the second reading for "self", I paid attention to how Karin represented herself in the interview both in terms of self, and in terms of self stepping into the role of the characters in the story. With regard to self as new girl, Karin stated: "... 'cos I felt scared when I came to school first and you don't really know anyone so you're pretty

shy and stuff and you don't know how to make friends kind of'. Karin's own experience of being a new girl highlights the emotions and feelings of starting a different school. Her account draws attention to some of the issues associated with such a transition, for example, feeling shy, lacking in confidence and not knowing how to make friends.

Putting herself in the role of the new girl, Karin maintains:

I would feel upset and I wouldn't want to never go back to school I'd want to go to a different school and try to make other friends. But that would make me what's just happening in the first school would make me not want to go to school...If I was in her place I would really feel worried because I was getting bullied and I don't know what to do and I feel like I don't wanna be there like I was just somewhere else...I would ignore them but it would be hard but I would tell the teacher I wouldn't stand this getting upset...And go and make friends with another nice pair of people instead of bullies...[I would say to myself]...I'm ignoring them they're just being bad at the moment and I'm the one that's not in the wrong.

Thus, in response to the bullying Karin as new girl would want to change schools, although she further states that the experience of being bullied would put her off going to school altogether. A later statement corroborates this view when Karin asserts that self as new girl would not know how to respond to bullying; rather she would want distance from the situation. In terms of what she would say to herself to make herself feel better if she was the new girl, Karin would use bolstering tactics to



confirm her outward behaviour, “I’m ignoring them”, and tell herself that she is not doing anything wrong.

In talking about herself in the role of the bullies, Karin states:

I’d feel kind of scared that I’d get told off because my parents would really tell me off (laughs)...[I would feel ashamed] Because I would think back to what I did and I would wanna say sorry but I don’t think the other girl would say ‘that’s okay’ because all the really bad things I did...I would [feel okay] if I was [one of the bullies]...actually, no actually I wouldn’t...No...[I would not feel proud]...Because afterward what I did throughout the day, two days.

Karin’s account of stepping into the role of the bullies suggests that she would fear the repercussions of engaging in bullying behaviours, in particular, reprimand from parents. Furthermore, bullying others would result in feelings of shame and remorse. Karin alludes, several times, to the idea of reflecting upon her behaviour. Following reflection, while Karin would want to apologize to the new girl for bullying her, she would fear a rejection of her apology. Throughout the interview, Karin chose not to put herself in the role of any of the other characters.

#### 7.2.4.3 *Reading 3: Reading for care.*

The third reading for care draws attention to matters of attachment and detachment:

...she (*new girl*) says she wants to join in with a game with them she will need to do some skipping but they wouldn’t let her...she fell down and then

the other children just walked away...so she was hiding behind a tree away from the other children in the playground that were bullying her...She's kind of scared 'cos I felt scared when I came to school first and you don't really know anyone so you're pretty shy and stuff and you don't know how to make friends kind of...She's hiding behind a tree because she's scared of the people that are bullying her...She fell down and the other children were just walking away and they wasn't bothered and they were kind of smirking...I think she (*new girl*) was trying to be friends but because she was different they were taking the mick out of her...I think she's feeling small inside and really sad that she couldn't make friends and people were bullying her so I don't think she would've wanted to go to school the next day...Because people are bullying her and threatening her to do stuff that she don't want to do...I wouldn't want to never go back to school I'd want to go to a different school and try to make other friends. But that would make me what's just happening in the first school would make me not want to go to school...Um she's (*short bully*) looking a bit smirk so...Yeah she's 'cos if you see her in that picture she's kind of smirking...Um because 'cos she might be laughing because the girl's fallen and she's enjoying it...but the little one hasn't really did anything but she's laughing she's joining in with it...[more worried in blackmail episode] 'cos I think she's going to get her hair cut off and they're threatening her...[if I was in new girl's place] I feel like I don't wanna be there like I was just somewhere...I think it might be she's (*short bully*) laughing kind of smirking again in that picture...and she's really upset in a way because once somebody did something and the one that's in the wrong feels bad after what she's did...I think she's (*tall dark bully*) mainly worried

in number 10 (*social isolation*) because she thinks back to what all the things she did...I would think back to what I did and I would wanna say sorry but I don't think the other girl would say 'that's okay' because all the really bad things I did... 'Cos she's (*short dark bully*) laughing and mainly she hasn't did any of it...she's joining in with them...And because say if somebody was walking down the road and there was two girls and one actually started it and the other one and both of them started it the other one would just come along and she won't even be involved with it I think she's involved with it because she's their friend...she's [short girl] trying to make friends the one in the first picture but they [tall dark and blonde one] ain't letting her so I think it ain't mainly the little one...Actually I would ignore them but it would be hard but I would tell a teacher I wouldn't stand this getting upset...And go and make friends with another nice pair of people instead of bullies...I think number 2 (*pessimistic ending*)...Yeah 'cos you can see her (*new girl*) standing up there and she's just going to sit down and feel bad about herself.

Reading for interpersonal relationships from a care perspective draws attention to attachment issues, both in terms of the new girl's desire to make attachments with her peers, and in terms of the reinforcer bully's connections with other members of the bully group. For example, on several occasions Karin refers to the new girl's wish to make friends with her new peers. Indeed, Karin's response draws upon her personal experience of being a new girl and her own desire to make new friends. Moreover, if she was the new girl Karin asserts that as a means of changing the situation she would seek alternative opportunities to make attachments with peers other than with the bullies. Conversely, Karin's account accentuates the new girl's



sense of isolation and detachment from her new peers. For example, Karin perceives that the new girl hides behind the tree as a form of protection, demonstrating care for herself. Furthermore, in taking the role of the new girl, Karin would want to distance herself from the bullying situation. Indeed, Karin's choice of probably ending for the hypothetical story is the new girl hiding herself behind the tree, reinforcing the sense of the new girl's isolation and detachment.

Focusing on care concerns in interpersonal relationships also makes evident Karin's awareness of the reinforcer bully's role during the bullying episodes in terms of her connection with other members of the bully group. While Karin's account draws attention to the reinforcer bully in terms of her encouragement of the bullies, she also claims that this character is "...not even involved with it". Furthermore, Karin asserts that the reinforcer bully is "joining in with it...because she's their [the bullies'] friend" drawing attention to the nature of her attachment and connection to the bully group. In addition, Karin suggests that, when the new girl first arrives at the school, the reinforcer bully would like to make friends with her, although the two main bullies "ain't letting her". Nevertheless, in terms of taking the role of the bully and the main bullies in the hypothetical story, Karin's account alludes to a sense of care towards the new girl in terms of reflection upon one's bullying behaviour. In turn, her account stresses the notion that such self-reflection would produce feelings of remorse and the wish to apologize.

On several occasions, Karin's account draws attention to the psychological and emotional harm caused to the victim by such behaviours. Furthermore, her account

focuses on the pleasure gained by the bullies from bullying others, suggesting a lack of care toward the new girl.

#### *7.2.4.4 Reading 4: Reading for justice.*

In the final reading, Karin's account focuses on issues of transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, violations of fairness and the bullies' fear of the negative consequences of engaging in bullying others:

Well basically there's this new girl that comes into school and um she's a new girl and she's pretty shy and stuff and so there's three other girls that are bullying her kind of to threatening and stuff...she was leaving to go home from school and one child stopped her from going home...one of the girls were holding a cigarette telling her to smoke it but she didn't want to but you could see in the picture she didn't want to and then they were threatening her to steal money from another child in school...but I think she was trying to be friends but because she was different they were taking the mick out of her...I think she's feeling small inside and really sad that she couldn't make friends and people were bullying her so I don't think she would've wanted to go to school the next day...Because people are bullying her and threatening her to do stuff that she don't want to do...[In group physical attack tall girl feeling] scared she might get told off or something...And the teacher might come walking passed...Um 'cos she might her parents might know about it...[If I was big one] I'd feel kind of scared that I'd get told off because my parents would really tell me off (laughs)...mostly these two [are feeling worried] because they don't wanna get in trouble...Um 'cos they're bullying her... 'Cos I think she's



going to get her hair cut off and they're threatening her and I think that one's the bad one and I think she's really worried...so they're making her smoke and she's like I don't wanna do it I don't wanna do it but they're forcing her...[Feeling worried] I think because they were threatening her and she might think another thing's going to happen to her that's even worser than this...I think the big one [is feeling ashamed]...Because she's did all them things to her and she don't really want to get in trouble and she's really upset in a way because once somebody did something and the one that's in the wrong feels bad after what she's all did...So she's (*blonde girl*) just cut it off and when she (*new girl*) gets home she might get in trouble 'cos they'll be trying to grow her hair or something...she's [short girl] trying to make friends the one in the first picture but they [tall dark and blonde one] ain't letting her so I think it ain't mainly the little one...I think she [short girl] might think she won't be the one that's getting in trouble 'cos she hasn't did anything...[More proud in coercion episode] because it's actually quite, it's started all the things that she did and plus she's holding a fag and that's the worse thing that she could do in here the worst thing but I think then again threatening her as well...No [I could not feel proud] Because afterward what I did throughout the day, two days...[To make myself feel better I'd] say 'I'm ignoring them they're just being bad at the moment and I'm the one that's not in the wrong'.

In terms of transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, Karin's account draws attention to the threatening and coercive nature of the bullying behaviours, such as forcing the new girl to do things against her will (e.g., smoke) and preventing the reinforcer bully from doing things that she wants to do (e.g., make



friends with the new girl). Furthermore, Karin's account highlights violations of fairness in terms of the bullies taking advantage of inequality. For example, she says of the new girl "...but I think she was trying to be friends but because she was different they were taking the mick out of her". Moreover, Karin's statements accentuate the notion that the bullies' fear of the consequences, both at school and at home, of engaging in bullying behaviour and suggest awareness that such behaviour is morally wrong. The perception that the bullies fear adult authority suggests that they have knowledge of school behaviour policy and practice and know what sanctions are in place for engaging in bullying behaviour. Furthermore, Karin's account suggests that the reinforcer bully "won't be the one that's getting in trouble" because she has participated to a minimal extent and has, therefore, not done anything wrong. Perhaps there is a sense that limited involvement in bullying behaviour on the part of the reinforcer bully is morally acceptable? At what point, however, does involvement in bullying behaviour become morally wrong? In taking the role of the new girl, Karin's account issues of moral choice in terms of a conflict between concern for the self and concern for others. Karin highlights the dilemma of ignoring the bullies as a means of addressing the situation by telling herself that, "...they're just being bad at the moment and I'm the one that's not in the wrong".

#### *7.2.4.5 Summary.*

In attending to Karin's account of bullying in school in terms of interpersonal relationships, she uses moral language to explain and justify its presence, and expresses her account in both care and justice terms. She expresses her account in terms of both attachment and detachment issues, characteristic of a care orientation, and with regard to matters pertaining to transgressions of morally acceptable

standards of behaviour and violations of fairness, distinctive of a justice orientation. Reading for both justice and care concerns supports the presence of two moral voices in Karin's account and, on occasion, certain statements can provide evidence for either perspective. For instance, "...but I think she [new girl] was trying to be friends but because she was different they were taking the mick out of her" can refer either to the new girl's desire for attachments (care orientation) or to the idea that the bullies are taking advantage of perceived inequalities (justice orientation). Furthermore, "...she's [short girl] trying to make friends with the one in the first picture but they [tall dark girl and blonde girl] ain't letting her so I think it ain't mainly the little one" can either refer to the reinforcer bully's desire to connect with the new girl (care orientation), or to advantage being taken of unequal power (justice orientation). Reading for care, Karin's account mainly reflects the new girl's concern to make friends with her peers. Reading for justice, Karin's account indicates a concern for both transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, on the one hand, and maintenance of fairness, on the other.

### 7.2.5 *Alistair's Account*

#### 7.2.5.1 *Reading 1: Reading for a general understanding.*

For the first reading of Alistair's interview transcript, I attended to his account of what was happening in the hypothetical story from the beginning to the end:

This boy he's coming to his new school, he transferred and um he's like he hasn't got any friends he doesn't know anybody and he wants to join in and he's wearing the wrong uniform and some people are teasing him and people are annoying him and being really nasty to him because he's the new



boy...like teasing him and calling him names...Um they're teasing him because he hasn't got the right school uniform and they just think it's funny and start teasing him...He's hiding from them 'cos he's so scared...he's being bullied by them three children...They're like laughing a lot because they're doing it for fun...They're annoying him and trying him to take a cigarette and like forcing him but he doesn't, they're bullying him in all the pictures except the first and the second.

In this reading, Alistair describes the peer relationship portrayed in the hypothetical story in terms of a bullying relationship, characterizing the aggressive behaviours depicted as bullying behaviour. He describes the tall dark character as “the leader” and “the boss”. The short boy is described as “a follower”. Alistair states that bullying occurs in school “...because them people are being horrible like they're bullies and they just want to be like all big...and be all cool so people will be scared of them and then they could take their things”. He perceives that the bullies engage in such behaviour with all new boys to the school. Furthermore, Alistair's account suggests that bullies gain pleasure from bullying others stating, “...they're doing it for fun” and “doing it for a laugh”.

Reading for a general understanding highlights Alistair's focus on both his knowledge of peer group dynamics and his perception that the bullies fear the consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour. He maintains that the tall dark character is the leader bully, “...the boss of the group...”, while the short character is “...a kind of follower...”. In terms of the follower bully, Alistair perceives that he is just going along with the other bullies “...like it's all a big game...” and observes



that he is minimally involved in bullying the new boy. On the other hand, the leader bully is perceived as starting the bullying, choosing to pick on the new boy because "...he won't tell..." and "...he's too weak and scared...". Moreover, other than concern for the consequences to themselves of bullying the new boy, the bullies do not care about what happens to him, according to Alistair's account. Specifically, Alistair suggests that the bullies are concerned with being reported to a teacher, being excluded from school and their parents finding out.

In terms of moral reasoning and understanding others' emotions, Alistair perceives that the new boy feels scared and unhappy because he is being tortured and hurt and does not wish to smoke for fear of dying. Furthermore, while Alistair suggests that the new boy would feel worried that the same thing might happen in other schools, he states that the new boy feels more worried in vignette 10 (*social isolation*) for fear that the bullying is going to continue. In taking the role of the new boy Alistair would feel sad and scared "'Cos you're the new boy and you've just come to school and you want to make friends but instead they're annoying you and not giving you a chance".

According to Alistair, the bullies would feel ashamed of themselves for bullying the new boy without provocation; the bullies' parents would also feel ashamed for raising children who bully. The leader bully could feel okay with the situation because he is familiar with bullying; he could feel more okay in the neutral vignette because he is the boss. Moreover, the blonde bully also feels okay because he is familiar with bullying, although he may also feel worried in case he gets into trouble and his parents find out. Both bullies could feel proud of bullying the new boy. In

contrast, Alistair in the role of the bully could not imagine feeling proud rather he would feel worried in case the new boy reported the bullying to a teacher resulting in exclusion from school. Although, Alistair states that if the new boy sought support from a teacher, the bullies would continue the bullying. The follower would feel worried because "...it's getting out of hand leading to trouble and he's just been following them doing nothing". In taking the role of the follower, Alistair would feel ashamed because of their behaviour toward the new boy.

#### *7.2.5.2 Reading 2: Reading for self.*

In the second reading for "self", I paid attention to how Alistair stepped into the role of the new boy, the bullies and the follower. With regard to taking the role of the new boy, Alistair maintains:

[I would feel] Sad probably, scared yeah... 'Cos you're the new boy and you've just come to school and you want to make friends but instead they're annoying you and not giving you a chance... Uh I would live with it for a while like a few like for say if it was for one day the situation where you do it again and like the next day the next day I'd go and report it to a teacher... I would tell a teacher yeah report it and um tell all what's been happening because if they do it again they're just going to get in even more trouble and um then they'll be like reported like a bully and then they get help like how to solve it... Like say like you're proud that you've like told a teacher and that in a couple of weeks or months it could be over.

In stepping into the role of the new boy, Alistair's account primarily focuses on his choice of coping strategies to address the bullying behaviour. After tolerating the bullying for a while, Alistair would tell a teacher. In order to make himself feel better, he would attempt to maintain a positive self-image by telling himself that he felt proud for telling a teacher, and would cognitively reframe the situation, that is, tell himself that at some point the situation would all be over. Reading for self in the role of the new boy also highlights Alistair's expectations of his new school, that is, he anticipated the opportunity to make new friends and have new chances. His account also suggests that in taking the role of the new boy, Alistair perceives that bullying is the bullies' problem.

In stepping into the role of the bullies in the hypothetical story, Alistair says:

Probably I'd stop it if it got out of hand...Because if you done it a few times and the person was okay with it like they probably were and then it would just really get out of hand and they kept doing that to all the new people...Yeah [worried] in case you get in like so if he went he probably would report it to a teacher because this is a big situation and he they might get suspended for a week or something for bullying...No not really [okay]...'Cos you're like a kid as well a student of the school you don't own it and it doesn't mean you can go around bullying people...Probably not [proud] 'cos I just can't imagine someone being proud about what they've done like bully him.



In taking the role of the bullies, Alistair states that he would want to stop the bullying if it “got out of hand”. In other words, he would want to intervene when the victim’s tolerance to the bullying behaviour had diminished with time, suggesting that people being bullied are fine with it at first. He further states that self in the role of the bully would fear the consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour. Specifically, Alistair asserts that self as bully would be worried that the new boy would report the situation to a teacher resulting in exclusion from school, suggesting that Alistair as bully is aware of the school’s behaviour policy and practice. In putting himself in the role of the bully, Alistair could neither feel proud for bullying the new boy nor okay. Furthermore, his account of self in the role of the bullies implies that it would be acceptable for an individual in a position of power or authority to bully others. In terms of self in the role of follower, Alistair would feel ashamed for being involved in the bullying, suggesting that if the bullies became acquainted with the new boy they would not bully him. However, according to Alistair, they do not want to get to know him.

#### *7.2.5.3 Reading 3: Reading for care.*

The third reading for interpersonal relationships and care concerns draws attention to attachment and lack of care issues:

This boy he’s coming to his new school, he transferred and um he’s like he hasn’t got any friends he doesn’t know anybody and he wants to join in and he’s wearing the wrong uniform and some people are teasing him and people are annoying him and being really nasty to him because he’s the new boy...Um they’re teasing him because he hasn’t got the right school uniform

and they just think it's funny and start teasing him...He's hiding from them 'cos he's so scared...They're like laughing a lot because they're doing it for fun...like they're bullies and they just want to be like all big...and be all cool so people will be scared of them and then they could take their things...[The new boy's feeling] Scared and unhappy...Because they're like torturing him, hurting him and if he took the cigarette he might die... 'Cos you're the new boy and you've just come to school and you want to make friends but instead they're annoying you and not giving you a chance...Um [the tall boy is feeling] like the same as all of them all four of them just doing this for a laugh...[If it were me] probably I'd stop if it got out of hand...Um [the little one's feeling] nothing he's just going along with them he's laughing like it's all a big game... 'cos well he is he's going along with the group...[New boy feeling more worried] over there in no 10 (*social isolation*) because he might be worried that they're going to get him again...like he's hiding...Yeah it's getting out of hand leading to trouble and he's (*follower*) just been following them doing nothing...Yeah other than that [the bullies] they wouldn't care what happened to him...Because what they're doing to him because it might like if they got to know him they'd leave him alone but they don't wanna do that so they might feel a bit ashamed...Because he's (*leader bully*) probably done this loads of times and hasn't been in trouble because if he goes to tell a teacher if the new kid went to tell a teacher they'd just bully him even more...[Little one's feeling okay] 'cos he probably done it before as well, he might be a little bit worried in case he gets into trouble and his parents find out...[The leader might feel proud] not in that one (*coercion*) but in *all* of them proud that he like he's doing this he doesn't really care...He would ask



like nicely, politely like telling him that he's a new kid to have some friends...Probably no 3 (*peer social support*) [ending] because he told the teacher and the teacher would ask somebody to play with him.

In this reading, Alistair draws attention to the negative effects of bullying on victims, such as, the emotional and physical consequences, and the notion that bullies gain pleasure from bullying, suggesting an awareness of a lack of care towards the new boy. Reading for interpersonal relationships from a care perspective highlights attachment concerns both from the new boy's point of view and from the perspective of the bullies. Alistair's account draws attention to the belief that the new boy desires to make new friends. Indeed, Alistair's choice of probable ending to the hypothetical story, that is, peer social support, lends weight to this perception. Conversely, his account also draws attention to the idea that the new boy isolates himself from the bullying situation as a form of self-protection. Furthermore, in focusing on issues of attachment, Alistair's account draws attention to the view that if the bullies became acquainted with the new boy they would not bully him. However, Alistair states that they do not wish to do this. While reading for care concerns highlights issues of attachment, it also focuses on the bullies' lack of care toward the new boy. Alistair states outright that the bullies do not care about what they are doing to the new boy. The notion that the bully has become desensitized to bullying others "Because he's probably done this loads of times..." further illustrates a lack of care. Furthermore, Alistair claims that the follower is minimally involved in the bullying, indeed "...has just been following them doing nothing...going along with the group". Interestingly, in stepping into the role of the bully, Alistair would probably want to stop if the situation "got out of hand". On the one hand, while this



statement demonstrates concern for the new boy, on the other, it intimates that up to a point, whether it be duration or type of bullying behaviour, for example, bullying is acceptable.

#### 7.2.5.4 Reading 4: *Reading for justice.*

In the fourth reading for interpersonal relationships and issues of justice, Alistair's account focuses on violations of fairness and justification for bullying:

...he's like he hasn't got any friends he doesn't know anybody and he wants to join in and he's wearing the wrong uniform and some people are teasing him and people are annoying him and being really nasty to him because he's the new boy...um they're teasing him because he hasn't got the right uniform...he's being bullied by them three children...They're annoying him and trying him to take a cigarette and like forcing him but he doesn't, they're bullying him in all the pictures except the first and the second...It's because them people are being horrible like they're bullies and they just want to be like all big...and be all cool so people will be scared of them and then they could take their things...They might do this to all of the people that come to this school like new boys...[The new boy's feeling] scared and unhappy...because they're like torturing him, hurting him and if he took the cigarette he might die...he's (*the bully*) holding the cigarette forcing him and he just went like that...like even if they (*the bullies*) were old to the school, say like if they were in Year 9 and the others were in Year 7 they think 'cos they're older than them they can do whatever they want to...he's (*little one*) not exactly doing anything like bad 'cos well he is he's going along with the

group but he's quite bad he's not doing anything like the worst you can do...Yeah [I could feel worried] in case you get in like so if he went he probably would report it to a teacher because this is a big situation and he they might get suspended for a week or something for bullying...[The bullies might feel ashamed] 'cos of what they're doing to the kid who hasn't done anything to them...Because he's (*the bully*) probably done this loads of times and hasn't been in trouble because if he goes to tell a teacher if the new kid went to tell a teacher they'd just bully him even more...[The bully's feeling more ok in] um that one over there no 1 (*neutral*) 'cos maybe he's like the boss of them and he goes 'oh yeah let's go and get him'...Like 'that boy he won't tell that he's too weak and scared the new boy'...[Little one feels okay] 'cos he probably done it before as well, he might be a little bit worried in case he gets into trouble and his parents find out...[I could not feel okay] 'cos you're like a kid as well a student of the school you don't own it and it doesn't mean you can go around bullying people...I would tell a teacher yeah report it and um tell all what's been happening because if they do it again they're just going to get in even more trouble and um then they'll be like reported like a bully and then they get help like how to solve it.

Reading for interpersonal relationships from a justice perspective draws attention to Alistair's justification for bullying behaviour. His account indicates that bullying is justified on a number of occasions: when the bullies have been provoked; when the behaviour is not "like the worst you can do"; when the bully either remains uncaught and unpunished for previous bullying of others, or perceives that this will continue to be the case; and, when there exists a power differential between bully and victim.



Reading for justice concerns also highlights Alistair's focus on violations of fairness with regards taking advantage of inequality. His account draws attention to the notion that in bullying the new boy, because he is new or wearing the wrong uniform, for example, the bullies are taking advantage of unequal power.

Furthermore, Alistair's account suggests an awareness of a power imbalance in terms of groups perceived as more powerful bullying those less powerful, that is, older pupils bullying younger ones, existing pupils bullying newcomers and adults bullying children. Moreover, Alistair's account highlights the bullies' fear of the consequences of engaging in bullying the new boy, such as teachers or parents finding out and exclusion from school suggesting awareness that such behaviour is morally wrong. The perception that the bullies' fear the consequences of bullying suggests that Alistair is aware of what the sanctions and rules are for engaging in such behaviour. Indeed, in putting himself into the role of the victim, Alistair's response to how he would address bullying behaviour suggests an awareness of the school's policy and practice with regard to bullying behaviour.

#### *7.2.5.5 Summary.*

Alistair uses moral language to explain and justify the presence of bullying in school, and expresses his account in terms of both care and justice concerns. He conveys his account in terms of attachment issues and in terms of a lack of care, features of a care orientation, and in relation to transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour and justification for bullying, characteristic of a justice orientation.

Reading for both care and justice concerns illustrates the presence of two moral voices in Alistair's account and, at times, particular statements provide evidence for either perspective. For example, "Because he's [leader bully] probably done this



loads of times and hasn't been in trouble because if he goes to tell a teacher if the new kid went to tell a teacher they'd just bully him even more" could either refer to the notion that the bully has become desensitized to bullying others suggesting a lack of care (care orientation), or it could mean that bullying is justified as the bully has not been caught for previous bullying (justice orientation). Furthermore, "'Cos he probably done it before as well, he might be a little bit worried in case he gets into trouble and his parents find out" can convey either the notion that the bullies have become desensitized to bullying others (care orientation) or it could allude to the sense that the bullies' fear the consequences of bullying (justice orientation). Reading for care, the reader could assume that these statements reflect Alistair's account in terms of attachment and care issues. Equally, reading for justice, Alistair's statements illustrate his thoughts about fairness of treatment and justification for bullying.

### 7.2.6 *Henry's Account*

#### 7.2.6.1 *Reading 1: Reading for a general understanding.*

For the first reading, I paid attention to Henry's account of what was happening in the hypothetical story from the beginning to the end:

Well there's a new boy in the school and basically they're all teasing him and trying to steal stuff from him... Yes and they're not treating him like they should be and not respecting him and they're annoying him... Well 'cos he's different they're teasing him and that shouldn't be the case just 'cos you're wearing something different doesn't mean you're not the same they're probably just looking for a fight... I think they're just trying to annoy him on

purpose block the way 'cos they don't like him...They're trying to make him do bad things like they're going to make him as bad as them...Well they're kind of still bullying him pushing him over and annoying him but they might think that's how they can toughen him up or something and they're not going to help him...He doesn't feel that he fits in with the rest of the children so he's kind of hiding from them...Probably [they] might be looking for him or waiting for him to come out.

In this reading, Henry describes the peer relationship depicted in the hypothetical story in terms of a bullying relationship, characterizing the aggressive behaviours as bullying behaviour. Henry suggests that bullying occurs due to the bullies' dislike of the new boy in particular or new boys generally, or due to a previous negative experience with the new boy. Reading Henry's account draws attention to the nature of the relationships among the bullies. Predominantly, Henry's account focuses on the notion that the short bully engages in bullying behaviour as a means of fitting in with the other bullies. Furthermore, although, according to Henry, this character is aware that such behaviour is wrong, he avoids helping the new boy as a form of self-protection because "if he starts helping the new boy then the others might start pushing him around as well". Similarly, the blonde bully, according to Henry's account, "who maybe didn't want to do something", engages in bullying the new boy because "the other one tells him to do it". Thus, in taking the role of the blonde bully, Henry would "only be doing it because I'd got friends who wanted to do it" since he wanted to be the bullies' friend. However, this contrasts with an earlier statement in which Henry, as blonde bully, would "...feel really kind of menacing just be looking for fight" and wanting to "hit someone for the sake of it". This

concurs with Henry's account of how the bullies in the story are feeling, "...they're probably just looking for a fight", in particular the blonde bully who is feeling "Probably disruptive and aggressive and he just wants to tease someone and he doesn't like the new boy".

With regard to moral reasoning and understanding others' emotions, Henry perceives that the new boy might feel "that he doesn't fit in" and perceives that he will be disbelieved if he tells someone about the bullies' behaviour. Then again, Henry observes that the new boy might feel proud for not crying, for not telling a teacher or for not being coerced into doing "really bad things". In contrast, self in the role of the new boy could not feel proud rather Henry would feel scared of going to school. In addition, in taking the role of the new boy Henry asserts that he would feel panicky, nervous and scared that he would not get his belongings back. With regard to the bullies, Henry states that they might feel worried in case someone found about their bullying behaviour; conversely, he suggests that they would feel okay about their behaviour as they feel indifferent about what they are doing. Indeed, in taking the role of the bullies, Henry would feel okay because "I wouldn't care".

Specifically, Henry posits that the blonde bully would feel "Probably disruptive and aggressive and he just wants to tease someone...". Paradoxically, Henry suggests that the blonde bully might be feeling ashamed because he did not want to bully the new boy, only doing so because "the other one tells him to do it". Moreover, he would be feeling more ashamed, according to Henry, in the physical obstruction, attack on personal possessions and blackmail episodes. In terms of the short bully, Henry asserts that he would, on the one hand, feel uncaring and proud and "just be doing it because they're his friends and the only way he would be able to stay their



friend is if he does something bad". On the other, Henry states that the short bully would be feeling worried "Because he knows he's done something wrong...".

In stepping into the role of the blonde bully and the short bully, Henry would experience similar emotions. On the one hand, in taking the role of the blonde bully, Henry states, "I would feel really kind of menacing just be looking for a fight...hit someone for the sake of it". Then again, later in the interview, Henry says he would be feeling ashamed "'Cos I'd be only doing it because I'd got friends who wanted to do it". In taking the role of the short bully, Henry would feel silly for "trying to fit in with the other friends, the bullies" and "if he is just trying to fit in with them then he'll probably be feeling upset as well that he's been bad".

#### *7.2.6.2 Reading 2: Reading for self*

In reading for "self", I paid attention to Henry's account of how he presented himself in his interview transcript in terms of taking the role of the new boy and the bullies in the hypothetical story. In relation to taking the role of new boy, Henry states:

[I would feel] um really panicky and nervous and scared that he won't get his books scared that I won't get my books back...No [not okay]...I wouldn't like to go to school, I'd be scared of going to school...Probably tell someone tell probably not their parents my parents and the teachers and the headmaster...If you told the teacher or someone then you could think tomorrow it will be better and they might even be expelled or something.

In taking the role of the new boy, Henry's account suggests that he would not like to go to school indeed he would feel afraid of going to school. Furthermore, he would feel afraid that he would not get his belongings back. In terms of coping with the bullying behaviour, Henry would seek adult social support. To make himself feel better he would tell himself that because he had told an adult, the situation might be better in the future, indeed the bullies might even be sanctioned.

In stepping into the role of the bullies, Henry asserts:

I would feel really kind of menacing just be looking for a fight...hit someone for the sake of it...Um maybe if that was the case that I was trying to fit in with the other friends the bullies then maybe deep down I would be feeling really like silly and I shouldn't have done that and maybe he should have told someone and if he is just trying to fit in with them then he'll probably be feeling upset as well that he's been bad...Probably not [feel worried]...Yes, probably [I would feel ashamed]...'Cos I'd be only doing it because I'd got friends who wanted to do it...I want to be their friends...Yeah [I would feel okay] I wouldn't care *muffled* annoy him and be really aggressive.

Broadly speaking, in stepping into the role of the bullies, Henry would probably not feel worried and would not care about bullying the new boy rather he would want to behave aggressively. However, in specifically taking the roles of the blonde bully and the short bully, Henry would experience contrasting emotions. In taking the role of the blonde bully, on the one hand, Henry's account draws attention to the notion of engaging in bullying behaviour for the sake of behaving aggressively, "I would be

feeling really kind of menacing just be looking for a fight...hit someone for the sake of it". On the other hand, later in his account, Henry suggests that self as blonde bully would probably feel ashamed because he was only engaging in the bullying of the new boy because the bullies were doing it and because he wanted to be their friend. Furthermore, in taking the role of the short bully, Henry would feel silly and upset for behaving badly and trying to fit in with the other bullies. In addition, he would feel regretful for his behaviour and wish that maybe he had intervened on behalf of the new boy. Throughout the interview, Henry chose not to put himself into the role of the tall dark bully.

#### 7.2.6.3 *Reading 3: Reading for care.*

The third reading for care draws attention to the harm caused by bullying behaviours and highlights Henry's concerns with issues of attachment and attentiveness:

Well they're kind of still bullying him pushing him over and annoying him...and they're not going to help him...Yes and they're not treating him like they should be and not respecting him and they're annoying him...He doesn't feel that he fits in with the rest of the children so he's kind of hiding from them...[They] probably might be looking for him or waiting for him to come out...Well I think that he might feel that he doesn't fit in...and if he tells someone they probably won't believe him and they're just being really mean...and he's feeling kind of panicking because he might need those books for school and he doesn't want to hide them or break them or vandalize them...[I would feel] um really panicky and nervous and scared that he won't get his books scared that I won't get my books back...I think he (*short bully*)



might have pushed him over and he's probably feeling like I don't care or something like that or he might just be doing it because they're his friends and the only way he would be able to stay their friend is if he does something bad and he might be feeling quite proud...[If I was the little one] um maybe if that was the case that I was trying to fit in with the other friends the bullies then maybe deep down I would be feeling really like silly and I shouldn't have done that and maybe he should have told someone and if he is just trying to fit in with them then he'll probably be feeling upset as well that he's been bad...Maybe the new boy's parents [might feel worried] if he got home and...parents might be asking him what he's been doing at school...and the boy who's trying to fit in [feels worried]...Because he knows he's done something wrong but if he starts helping the new boy then the others might start pushing him around as well...Probably maybe one of the bullies [might be feeling ashamed] who maybe didn't want to do something and the other one tells him to do it and then he did something really bad and then he might be feeling really ashamed and probably this boy here (*blonde bully*)... 'Cos I'd be only doing it because I'd got friends who wanted to do it...I want to be their friends...Only the bullies [might feel okay] but no I don't think anyone else would be feeling okay...Because they (*the bullies*) don't really care they're just trying to vandalize everything he has and annoy him and try to make him do bad things and they might even be trying to get him into trouble...Yeah [I would be feeling okay] I wouldn't care...I wouldn't like to go to school, I'd be scared of going to school...If he's still scared about it he'll probably go and sit next to an adult or hide behind the tree but in the end he might teach them that being bad isn't everything and you don't just have

to be popular and they might end up friends he might find a new friend...[Ending] probably when they're all playing with each other.

In this reading, Henry's account draws attention to the negative psychological and emotional effects of bullying behaviour on the new boy and on the short bully. For example, Henry focuses on the new boy's feelings of fear and panic, and the short bully's feelings of upset for behaving badly toward the new boy. Reading for interpersonal relationships from a care perspective, Henry's account highlights attachment and detachment issues both in terms of the new boy in relation to his peers, and in terms of peer relationships among members of the bully group. On the one hand, Henry perceives that the new boy feels that he does not fit in with the other children. On the other, his account draws attention to the notion that the short boy takes part in bullying the new boy as a means of "...trying to fit in with the other friends the bullies...because they're his friends and the only way he would be able to stay their friend is if he does something bad...". In addition, Henry's account highlights the notion that the short bully takes part in bullying the new boy as a form of protection because "...if he starts helping the new boy then the others might start pushing him around as well". Furthermore, Henry perceives that the blonde bully takes part in bullying the new boy because "...the other one tells him to do it", explaining that this character would only be involved to maintain their friendship. In contrast to the account's focus upon the new boy's sense of disconnection and isolation, toward the end of the interview Henry highlights the potential for attachments and connections through new friendships, selecting the children all playing together as the most probably ending to the hypothetical story. Moreover, in reading for care, on several occasions Henry's account draws attention to issues of



attentiveness, both in terms of the bullies and in terms of social support from others. In terms of the bullies, Henry perceives that they “don’t really care” and “they’re not treating him like they should be and not respecting him”. In contrast, his account draws attention to the short bully’s regret that “I shouldn’t have done that and maybe he should have told someone”. In terms of social support from others, Henry asserts on the one hand that if the new boy tells someone “they probably won’t believe him”. On the other, he states that if others find out about the bullying, for example, the teacher or his parents, they might express concern. Finally, reading for care issues provides evidence for Henry’s concern with being listened to: “...but in the end he might teach them that being bad isn’t everything and you don’t just have to be popular and they might end up friends he might find a new friend...”.

#### *7.2.6.4 Reading 4: Reading for justice.*

In the fourth reading, Henry’s account focuses on transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, violations of fairness and a sense that such behaviour is morally wrong:

...And they’re not treating him like they should be and not respecting him and they’re annoying him...Well ‘cos he’s different they’re teasing him and that shouldn’t be the case just ‘cos you’re wearing something different doesn’t mean you’re not the same they’re probably just looking for a fight...I think they’re just trying to annoy him on purpose block the way ‘cos they don’t like him...They’re trying to make him do bad things like they’re going to make him as bad as them...Um they might just not like new children because there might have been another new person and they didn’t like him



or maybe they've met him before and they didn't like him...[Short bully] probably disruptive and aggressive and he just wants to tease someone and doesn't like the boy...[If I was the short bully] I would feel really kind of menacing just be looking for a fight...hit someone for the sake of it...And the boy who's trying to fit in [feels worried]....Because he (*short bully*) knows he's done something wrong but if he starts helping the new boy then the others might start pushing him around as well...and maybe the bullies [are feeling worried] if someone finds out about it and if he tells the teacher or his parents or someone about it they might be feeling a bit worried...Probably maybe one of the bullies who maybe didn't want to do something [are feeling ashamed] and the other one tells him to do it and then he did something really bad and then he might be feeling really ashamed and probably this boy here (*blonde bully*)...Because they don't really care they're just trying to vandalize everything he has and annoy him and try to make him do bad things and they might even be trying to get him into trouble...they might be wanting him to do bad things get him into trouble...and start doing really bad things.

Reading Henry's account for interpersonal relationships from a justice perspective draws attention to matters of transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour both in terms of the bullies "looking for trouble" and behaving aggressively "for the sake of it", and in terms of the bullies oppressive and coercive behaviour. To a lesser extent, Henry's account also highlights his concern with violations of fairness in terms of the bullies taking advantage of inequality, that is, the new boy's difference, the new boy's 'newness' and their dislike of new boys

more generally. In addition, reading for interpersonal relationships from a justice perspective, focuses attention upon issues of moral choice in relation to a conflict between concern for the self and concern for others. For example, Henry claims “And the boy who’s trying to fit in [feels worried]....Because he (*short bully*) knows he’s done something wrong but if he starts helping the new boy then the others might start pushing him around as well”. Henry’s account also suggests that both the short bully (“...he knows he’s done something wrong”) and the blonde bully (“...and then he did something really bad...”) are aware that such behaviour is morally unacceptable. Furthermore, the perception that the bullies are concerned with the consequences of their bullying behaviour to themselves should the teacher or the new boy’s parents find out, indicates knowledge of the repercussions for bullying another.

#### 7.2.6.5 Summary.

In reading for interpersonal relationships, Henry uses moral language to explain the presence of bullying in school, and expresses his account in both care and justice concerns. Attachment issues and concerns with the harm caused by bullying, features of a care orientation, and transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, violations of fairness and the sense that bullying behaviour is morally wrong, characteristics of a justice orientation, are evident in his account. Reading for both care and justice orientations demonstrates the presence of two moral voices in Henry’s account and, on occasions, certain statements provide evidence for either perspective. For example, “Probably maybe one of the bullies [might be feeling ashamed] who maybe didn’t want to do something and the other one tells him to do it and then he did something really bad and then he might be feeling really ashamed and probably this boy here (*blonde bully*)...” can refer to either the nature of the



blonde bully's attachment to the bully group (care orientation), or to the sense that the blonde bully feels ashamed for doing something morally wrong (justice orientation). Moreover, "Because they don't really care they're just trying to vandalize everything he has and annoy him and try to make him do bad things and they might even be trying to get him into trouble" can convey either the sense of a lack of care on the part of the bullies (care orientation), or to transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour in terms of getting the new boy into trouble (justice orientation). Reading for interpersonal relationships in terms of care concerns, the reader could assume that these statements reflect Henry's account with regard to issues of attachment and attentiveness. Similarly, reading from a justice perspective, Henry's statements provide evidence for transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, violations of fairness and the notion that engaging in bullying behaviour is morally wrong.

### *7.3 Summary*

This chapter presented the analysis of six interviews with primary school children using the voice-centred relational method. The analysis revealed that participants used moral language in their explanations and justifications for school bullying, making rich and insightful comments about the complexity of interpersonal relationships and peer processes in relation to involvement in bullying others. Central to the task of exploring these understandings of school bullying was the distinction between two relational perspectives or moral orientations, that is, concerns of care (attachment/detachment, connection/disconnection) and justice (equality, reciprocity, fairness).



In reading for interpersonal relationships in terms of care concerns, core themes were evident in the case studies, such as awareness of the harm caused by bullying behaviours and awareness of issues regarding peer attachments and friendships in relation to bullying behaviour. All accounts drew attention, to varying degrees, to the negative emotional effects of bullying on the victim's health and well-being (e.g., anger, fear, worry, shame, sadness, unhappiness). In addition, Annie, Mustafa, Karin and Henry's accounts highlighted the negative psychological effects (e.g., lowered self-esteem, sleeping difficulties, crying, hopelessness, loneliness), and Karin and Alistair's accounts called attention to negative physical effects (e.g., bodily harm). All accounts drew attention to the hierarchical structure of the bully group, with participants identifying one or two leader bullies aided by assistants and/or followers/reinforcers. Annie and Karin's accounts drew attention to the bullies' manipulation of interpersonal relationships within the peer group (e.g., deciding who is or is not a member of the "popular" group; not allowing the follower to befriend the new girl). Freema, Karin and Alistair characterized the follower or reinforcer as minimally involved, while providing support and encouragement to the bullies.

All but Mustafa's account drew attention to the nature of attachments and interpersonal relationships among individuals in the group in terms of the arousal of positive feelings associated with being part of the popular group (Annie), protection from exclusion from the bully group (Annie, Freema), maintenance of friendships with the bullies (Henry), and protection from becoming the bullies' next target (Freema). With regard to the nature of the follower/reinforcer/small assistant character's attachment to the group, accounts focused on maintenance of friendships with the bullies (Karin, Henry), "fitting in" with the bullies (Henry), protection from

becoming the bullies' next target (Freema, Henry), and protection from exclusion from the bully group (Freema). In addition, both Annie and Freema's accounts highlighted the ambivalence of the assistant's involvement in bullying others in terms of their participation as a means of protection from exclusion from the group.

Reading for interpersonal relationships in respect of justice concerns, drew attention to the notion of bullying behaviour as a violation of fairness, bullying as a transgression of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, and justification for bullying. All but Mustafa's account drew notice to bullying as a violation of fairness, whereby the bullies were perceived as taking advantage of perceived inequalities in terms of individual differences (e.g. appearance) or perceived status differences (e.g., "geeky" versus "popular" children, newcomers versus established pupils). Further evidence of an awareness and understanding that bullying involves a power imbalance in favour of the bully, was found in Mustafa, Freema, Karin and Henry's accounts, which highlighted the notion that the bullies had transgressed the social norms of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, in terms of using threatening, coercive, oppressive and dominating behaviours. Freema, Mustafa, and Alistair's accounts highlighted justification and support for bullying from the bullies' perspective under a number of conditions. These included responding to provocation from the victim (Freema, Alistair); when the bully was in a position of power and authority (Alistair); when the bullying behaviour was considered minor (e.g., "not like the worst you can do", Alistair); when the bully remained uncaught and unpunished (Alistair); and "because the bullies never had a good life" (Mustafa).

Reading for both justice and care orientations clarified the logic of participants' moral thinking. On several occasions, responses that may have appeared morally doubtful when solely viewed from a justice perspective reflected sophisticated social observations regarding involvement in school bullying when analyzed from a care perspective. For example, the notion, evident in Annie and Freema's accounts, that the assistant bullies were only minimally involved in bullying the new girl compared with the perception that such involvement was as a means of self-protection against victimization from the leader bully (Freema) or from exclusion from the group (Annie, Freema). While research has recently begun to focus on the influence of the social group context on the experience of school bullying, in particular the extent of individuals' participation in the process, the present analysis both complements and extends this work by revealing how children themselves think about how and why children become involved in bullying others. The accounts vividly illustrate that children do not face or resolve school bullying in a vacuum. Rather, the ways in which children understand and construct school bullying and their means of facing and addressing conflict in their interpersonal relationships are fluid and complex with children negotiating their involvement in school bullying from within an ongoing context of peer relations. The present analysis clearly demonstrates the need for considering school bullying in the context of interpersonal relationships and from children's own perspectives.

In viewing the bully characters in the hypothetical story as interdependent and embedded in an involved social structure of interpersonal relationships, I decided to explore further children's understanding of the peer processes involved in school bullying. To this end, I conducted focus group discussions combined with a



structured research activity to explore children's representations of each of the hypothetical characters in the bully group, with the next chapter presenting the results of this study.

## CHAPTER 8

### Study 2 Results

#### *8.1 Overview*

The overall aim of Study 2 was to engage children meaningfully as active participants in the research process in order to explore their understanding of the role of the social group context in which school bullying takes place. Building on the results of Study 1 reported in Chapters 6 and 7, which indicated children's rich insight regarding the complex nature of interpersonal relationships and peer processes in relation to involvement in bullying others, I conducted focus group discussions to explore further their representations of each of the hypothetical characters in the bully group. The next section presents the results of this study.

Focus group data were analyzed collectively using a condensed version of the voice-centred relational method used in Study 1 as outlined in Chapter 5, Section 5.7.3, p. 193. The method revolved around a set of three readings of each focus group account. For the first reading, I read the transcript for a general understanding of what the participants were telling me, identifying the role names ascribed to each character, the nature of each character's role in the bullying process and an understanding of each character's moral reasoning. In the second and third readings, I paid attention to how participants represented members of the bully group in terms of their interpersonal relationships with others within the bullying process. Specifically, the second reading focused upon concerns of care, responsibilities,

interdependence and connection, whereas the third reading focused upon issues of justice, rights, independence and autonomy.

The latter two readings involved a three-step process. First, I used coloured crayons to trace and underline certain statements in the transcripts that represented each reading, that is, care (red) and justice (blue) (see Appendix U, p. 549, for an example). Second, after reading and underlining for self, care and justice concerns, I completed summary worksheets, documenting participants' voices in one column and my interpretative summaries in the other (see Appendix V, p. 563, for an example). Finally, based on the readings, I compiled character profiles for each member of the bully group, reported below.

## 8.2 *Character Profiles*

### 8.2.1 *Leader Bully*

#### 8.2.1.1 *Reading 1: Reading for a general understanding.*

For the first reading of the flipchart outputs, I paid attention to the participants' allocation of names to the leader bully character. Groups offered a variety of names, reflecting their perception of the principal role of the leader in the bullying process ("leader" 1/1B, "ringleader" 1/2G, "main character" 2/2G), the sense of an individual in control of others ("master" 2/3B) and the strategic nature of the role ("commander/planner" 1/3B).

In this reading, attention is drawn to the nature of the role of the leader in the bullying process in terms of their pro-active, leader-like behaviour. Male group discussions draw attention to direct physically aggressive behaviours perpetrated by



the leader such as starting trouble, fighting, physical restraint, stealing others' money and belongings and hurting others, and direct verbally aggressive behaviours such as blackmail, teasing, threatening others, swearing and shouting. Analysis of the female group discussions highlights the leader's direct verbally aggressive behaviours such as threatening others, picking on people who are different, swearing and rude words, watching and laughing, and indirect aggression, that is, social exclusion, ignoring others. In terms of behaviours directed toward other members of the bully group, analysis of both male and female discussions identified threatening others to follow them, telling others what to do, and forcing others to do what he or she wants.

In terms of moral reasoning and understanding the leader's emotions, male and female groups both perceive that the leader would feel pride (e.g., "Makes the bully feel proud of themselves...makes them feel in charge and big inside" 2/3G), anger (e.g., "Angry, annoyed, rageful" 1/1B), fear (e.g., "Big on outside but scared on inside" 2/2B) and indifference (e.g., "He doesn't care" 2/2B). One male group suggested that the leader would feel cowardly.

#### *8.2.1.2 Reading 2: Reading for care.*

The second reading for interpersonal relationships from a care perspective draws attention to the nature of the leader's role in terms of attachment issues and the harmful nature of their behaviour:

They feel safe...Need followers (1/1B)

Someone who people suck up to (1/2B)

Needs two people to take the blame (1/3B)

Everybody follows (2/1B)

He makes people upset...acts rude and hurts them...Enjoys bullying others to make himself feel big...He doesn't care...Bully needs back-up...needs to have friends to feel safe (2/2B)

Strong so other people follow him (2/3B)

The head girl tells everyone to do things but she just stands there watching and laughing...the head girl: watches and laughs...The head girl isn't always around so if a teacher came the head girl wouldn't get told off...The head girl might have bullied the other two and then they became one big bullying group...the head girl might have bullied the other two and now they want to be friends with her...the slave and the tagger might not like the head girl. But they stay with her to...not get bullied (1/1G)

Look at me. Ha ha! I've got your book...She bullies because she's lonely...Lots of friends because they don't want her to bully them...she might think everyone's actually her friends but they just don't want her to bully them...A little lonely and if she is popular other people would want to be her friend and she makes them bully other people (1/3G)

The bully gave the new girl a cigar, which is bad...Tall one is lonely and wanted to be respected for once...I think people only be bullies' friends so they don't get bullied!!!...people hang around a bully so they don't get bullied...I think the bully has two bully friends...she is a bullying get a friend (2/1G)

Grinning and smirking!...Feeling...OK!!!...Happy what she is doing to Sophie (*victim*) (2/2G)

Most bullies say, "if you tell anyone that I have been bullying you then I will beat you up". Like threatening them...most bullies say if you don't be my friend I will beat you up...Makes you feel happy...Think it is fun...they think it is nice to bully someone...they think it is funny...Need encouragement from others...need back up...need rude remarks...need helpers...needs friends...most bully have no friends...most bullies pay people to be their friends...All the other girls are bullying the new girl...Bully for fun or bully when they are angry (2/3G)

Reading for interpersonal relationships from a care perspective draws attention to the harmful nature of the leader's behaviour. One male group stated, "He makes people upset...acts rude and hurts them" (2/2B). Furthermore, attention is drawn to the perception that the leader gains pleasure from bullying others, suggesting a lack of care toward their targets. For example, one group states "They think it is fun...they think it is nice to bully someone...they think it is funny" (2/3G). This reading highlights the nature of the bully's attachments to others in terms of need. While



male group discussions demonstrate the bully's need for followers as a means of providing support and safety, reading of the female group discussions draws attention to the perception that the leader needs connection with others for support and friendship. The perception that peers offer the leader protection from the consequences of his or her behaviour was observed by both males and females (e.g., "The head girl isn't always around so if a teacher came the head girl (*bully*) wouldn't get told off" 1/1G). Furthermore, analysis of the female group discussions draws attention to the bully's sense of isolation as a motivation to aggress against others, for example, one group said, "She bullies because she's lonely" (1/3G). In addition, females perceived that the bully's friendships with others were founded upon their fear of being bullied by her and the assumption that such an attachment will offer them protection against victimization. For example, one group claimed, "She might think everyone's actually her friends but they just don't want her to bully them" (1/3G). Another stated "I think people only be bullies' friends so they don't get bullied!!!" (2/1G).

#### 8.2.1.3 *Reading 3: Reading for justice.*

In the third reading, transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour and rectification of a previous situation of unfairness are highlighted:

Blames it on his followers...they could threaten people to follow them...takes advantage over smaller people...Might feel angry because victim has done something to them so they want revenge...Think they're cool...thinks he is in charge...think they're the best...don't expect people to fight back...Usually has trouble at home or school...Aggressive – something

happens at home and take it out on people at school...might be doing this because of things at home. He might need a social worker (1/1B)

Sad background...he got bullied once so he is unhappy...really sad and unhappy now or once before...alcohol, dey bully 'coz dey unhappy wit der life...a person who has had an unhappy time at home and he wants to wreck on other people (1/2B)

Tells other people what to do...He thinks he's big man...thinks he's king...he thinks he is a leader (2/1B)

Someone who leads a gang, shows off, bullies...starts trouble thinks all bad gangster...disobeys rules and don't wear uniform...leads the bully gang...horrible and in charge...Thinks he is a big hard man by bullying the new people...thinks that they're all smart and cool...Gets a bad life at home and takes it out on other people...not having a good life at home... (2/2B)

Bosses them about (2/3B)

A head girl is someone who bosses everyone about...the head girl is bossy and makes people do things for her...the head girl tells everyone to do things...makes other people do the things she doesn't want to do...she makes the other two do things to the girl who is being bullied...she could boss the other bullies around and make them be mean to the girl...a head girl makes all people in her gang frightened of her so they will do whatever she wants

them to...the head girl is completely in control...A head girl is someone who is bossy and always thinks she's in control...The head girl might have been bullied before and she wants to show other people what it feels like...A head girl is someone who people are frightened of (1/1G)

Bully people who are known as geeks or boffins...Pick on people as they are different as I am!!!!....Bossy – tells people what to do...Scared of being found out...Troubled background...troubled (at home?) (1/2G)

The best bully might be really popular and bullies people because she knows she is better than them...Bullying the other two around...she might be ordering the other two about and forcing them to do things (1/3G)

The tall girl is threatening the girl who is getting bullied to smoke a cigarette...She's tall and she looks like she tells everyone what to do...she is doing all the bad stuff and the other two girls aren't really doing nothing...always in front and she always has ideas (2/1G)

Powerful...feeling powerful!!!!...feeling that she is the boss...Thinking she is the boss!...thinking 'I don't want her in the school!'...she's in charge!...she thinks she can push Sophie (*victim*) about (2/2G)

Most bullies say, "if you tell anyone that I have been bullying you then I will beat you up". Like threatening them...most bullies say if you don't be my



friend I will beat you up...Makes them feel in charge and big inside...Think they are strong (2/3G)

In reading for interpersonal relationships from a justice perspective, analysis of the group discussions draws attention to transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour and support for bullying in relation to rectifying a previous situation of unfairness. With regard to the former, the group discussions primarily focus on the bully's sense of power and authority in terms of his or her dominating and oppressive behaviour such as taking control, giving orders and initiating bullying behaviour. One male group defined a leader as "Someone who leads a gang, shows off, bullies...starts trouble...and in charge" (2/2B). A female group suggested that a leader is "...someone who bosses everyone about...and makes people do things for her...makes other people do the things she doesn't want to do...is completely in control" (1/1G). Indeed, one group suggested an awareness that the leader violates norms of behaviour stating they "Bully people who are known as geeks or boffins...Pick on people as they are different as I am!!!!" (1/2G). Furthermore, this reading draws attention to the coercive nature of the leader's behaviour. One female group stated that the leader "...makes all the people in her gang frightened of her so they will do whatever she wants them to" (1/1G). Attention is also drawn to the threatening and intimidating nature of the bully's behaviour. For example, one female group claimed, "Most bullies say 'if you tell anyone that I have been bullying you then I will beat you up'. Like threatening them...most bullies say 'if you don't be my friend I will beat you up'" (2/3G).

Moreover, engaging in bullying others is justified in terms of rectifying previous unfair treatment that the leader has experienced. However, whereas male discussions focus on general unfair treatment experienced at home, for example, perceiving that the leader “Gets a bad life at home and takes it out on other people” (2/2B), females focus on unfair treatment in terms of the bully’s previous experience of being bullied. For example, one female group suggested that the leader “might have been bullied before and she wants to show other people what it feels like” (1/1G).

#### *8.2.1.4 Summary.*

In reading for participants’ understanding of bullying in school in terms of interpersonal relationships from the perspective of the leader, participants express their accounts using both justice and care concerns. In their accounts, participants draw attention to the harm caused by the leader’s behaviour. Reading for care concerns also highlights the perception that need motivates the leader’s attachment with others, that is, need for safety and support, in the case of male accounts, and need for friendship and support, in the case of female accounts. In addition, males and females drew attention to the sense that peers offer the leader protection from the consequences of his or her behaviour. Furthermore, female accounts draw notice to the bully’s sense of isolation as a reason for aggressing against others. Evidence for justice concerns is also present in the group accounts, with the focus predominantly on the leader’s transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour and to a lesser extent on the justification for bullying as a means of rectifying a previous situation of unfairness.

## 8.2.2 Assistant Bully

### 8.2.2.1 Reading 1: Reading for a general understanding.

For the first reading of the flipchart outputs, I paid attention to the participants' suggestion of names for the assistant bully character. Groups suggested a variety of names, which predominantly reflected their perception of this character's active second-in-command type role in the bullying process ("sidekick" 1/1B, "sidekicks/deputies/bodyguards" 1/3B, "2<sup>nd</sup> in charge" 2/1B, "the doer" 1/3G, "1<sup>st</sup> back-up" 2/1G, "2<sup>nd</sup> boss" 2/2G, "2<sup>nd</sup> gang member/leader's best mate" 2/3G). On a couple of occasions, groups highlighted the servile nature of the role ("suck up puppet/pet" 1/2B, "slave" 1/1G) and the supporting nature of the role ("disciple/follower" 2/2B, "backer up" 2/3B).

This first reading draws attention to the nature of the role of the assistant in the bullying process. Male group discussions highlight activities such as being forced to bully others, assisting and supporting the leader, tagging along, restraining the victim, threatening others, encouraging and obeying the leader. Analysis of the female group discussions highlights the assistant's part in the bullying process in terms of making fun of the victim, offering encouragement and support to the leader, tagging along, obeying the leader and taking the blame for the bullying.

In terms of moral reasoning and understanding the assistant's emotions, group discussions mainly focused on the assistant's fear of the leader (e.g., "Been threatened of scared of leader...acts big but really is scared...he is scared of leader...scared of being bullied" 2/2B). Female groups also perceived that the assistant would feel worried in terms of vexing the leader (e.g., "The slave girl is



worried that she might get into trouble but she doesn't want to have an argument with the head girl", 1/1G).

#### 8.2.2.2 *Reading 2: Reading for care.*

In the second reading for care considerations, attention is drawn to attachment and detachment issues and concerns of isolation and disconnection:

Tags along...Goes along with the leader, assistance...Helps him...Probably joined because he was scared...he feels safe when he is with him!...feels safe...he feels safe with the leader (1/1B)

Someone who is backing the bullies...He isn't really a bully but he is just a suck up...The bully just wants to be protected (1/2B)

Follows leader...Scraping in with the crowd...Follow him...Loner, no friends...loser, just want to hang around...He feels like somebody in the gang, before he was a nobody...No friends (only gang) (2/1B)

Stupid follower...Eggs on the leader...He obeys the leader...Can't fight his own battles (2/2B)

Helping...Agreeing...Talks trash to back up the Master (2/3B)

The slave tags along and does everything the head girl tells her to but she only does it because she doesn't want to get bullied...the slave girl can't

stand up for herself...the slave is always kind of standing back and out of the way of everything...The slave needs to be loyal to the head girl but is frightened of her and does what she says...she does everything that the head girl tells her just so she won't get bullied...the slave girl (*assistant*) might not want to be a bully anymore but she might be scared to go and play with her (*victim*) because of the head girl (*leader bully*)...The slave girl might want to be friends with the new girl but can't because the head girl might bully her...the slave girl might like the new girl but she can't tell the other two otherwise she might be bullied (1/1G)

Might feel left out...small and out of the way...The two other bullies might think they need to bully so that they can still be her friends...she does what she's told by the main bully so she doesn't get bullied (1/3G)

The blonde girl likes to bully I think (2/1G)

Sticking up for her friends...Happy about bullying Sophie (*victim*)!!!!...happy...quite happy (2/2G)

Reading for interpersonal relationships from a care perspective draws attention to attachment and detachment issues. The nature of the attachment relationship with the leader is characterized by the assistant's support for ("Sticking up for her friends" 2/2G) and protection of ("The bully just wants to be protected" 1/2B) him or her. Nevertheless, reading for care concerns focuses attention on the assistant's sense of isolation and disconnection from others as a motive for attachment to the bully

group. One male group suggested that the assistant was a “Loner, no friends...loser, just want to hang around” (2/1B). A female group claimed that the assistant “Might feel left out...small and out of the way” (1/3G). Indeed, reading of the female discussions highlights attachment issues in terms of the assistant’s desire to befriend the new girl, although fear of the leader prevents her from taking action. According to one group of girls, “The slave girl (*assistant*) might want to be friends with the new girl but can’t because the head girl (*leader*) might bully her...the slave girl might like the new girl but she can’t tell the other two otherwise she might be bullied” (1/1G). All the same, this reading also draws attention to the perception that the assistant gains pleasure from bullying others, indicating a lack of care. For example, one group claimed that the assistant is “Happy about bullying Sophie (*victim*)!!!...happy...quite happy” (2/2G).

Focusing on care concerns within interpersonal relationships draws attention to the perception that connection with the leader offers the assistant a number of benefits. Whereas male group discussions cited improved status (“He feels like somebody in the gang, before he was a nobody” 2/1B), protection from others (“Can’t fight his own battles” 2/2B) and safety (“...he feels safe when he is with him!...feels safe...he feels safe with the leader” 1/1B), female group accounts mentioned protection against victimization from the leader. For example, one group suggested “The slave (*assistant*) tags along and does everything the head girl (*bully*) tells her to but she only does it because she doesn’t want to get bullied...the slave needs to be loyal to the head girl but is frightened of her and does what she says” (1/1G).



### 8.2.2.3 Reading 3: Reading for justice

The third reading calls attention to transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour and violations of fairness:

Holds people's hands while leader hits them...Probably joined because he was scared...Thinks they won't get bullied...thinks he has authority (1/1B)

A coward scared of big bully (1/2B)

Acts like he is hard...He wants to take his revenge because he wants to take over...He wants to be in charge...Leader tells him to do nasty things (2/1B)

He obeys the leader...Been threatened of scared of the leader...follower – acts big but really is scared...he is scared of leader...scared of being bullied...The leader uses the followers (2/2B)

He threatens people...No choice to be a bully...has not got any choice...scared of what the black boy might do to him if he don't bully people...Bossed around...bullied to do stuff for the Master...bullied into doing stuff...forced to bully people (2/3B)

The slave is different to the head girl because she is the one who is doing everything that the head girl tells her to do...The slave needs to be loyal to the head girl but is frightened of her and does what she says...The slave girl is frightened of the head girl and she does what the head girl wants her

to...the slave does everything the head girl wants her to. I think she's frightened of the head girl, that why she does it...the slave I think is really frightened and scared of the head girl, so she does everything that the head girl tells her just so she won't get bullied...the slave might not want to be a bully anymore but she might be scared to go and play with her because of the head girl...the slave girl is worried that she might get into trouble but she doesn't want to have an argument with the head girl...The slave has to be the kind of person who you can push around and you can be bossy but they still tag along...the slave girl has to be able to take orders from the head girl and do horrible things to other people (1/1G)

Might get dragged into a lot of situations...could get the blame a lot with the teachers...the Small One probably gets bossed around a lot by the blonde one...she is a combination of the two girls – she might not really want to bully but still plays a big part...she might be the girl to get caught – by doing all the things to the *bullied* girl...the small one is getting told off while the other two went round the corner laughing...bossed around...she does what she's told by the main bully so she doesn't get bullied (1/3G)

Blonde like to be follow instructions...I think the 1<sup>st</sup> back up is scared of the tall dark leader so she following what the leader says (2/1G)

Doer, she does what the leader tells her to...2<sup>nd</sup> gang member – she gets told what to do by the leader, and she does the things that bully the girl. She follows in her footsteps...I think the leader is just telling the 2<sup>nd</sup> person to do

this and do that! The 2<sup>nd</sup> person just follows...she doesn't think just does what leader tells her to do (2/3G)

Reading for interpersonal relationships from a justice perspective draws attention to transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour and violations of fairness. Reading for justice concerns focuses attention on the perception that the assistant experiences the leader's behaviour as threatening and intimidating. One male group suggested that the assistant had "Been threatened of scared of the leader...he is scared of leader...scared of being bullied" (2/2B). A female group claimed that "The slave girl (*assistant*) is frightened of the head girl (*leader*) and she does what the head girl wants her to...the slave girl does everything the head girl wants her to. I think she's frightened of the head girl, that why she does it...the slave I think is really frightened and scared of the head girl, so she does everything that the head girl tells her just so she won't get bullied..." (1/1G).

Reading for justice also focuses attention on the sense that the assistant experiences the leader's behaviour as dominating and oppressive. One male group held that the assistant had "No choice to be a bully...has not got any choice...scared of what the black boy might do to him if he don't bully people" (2/3B). A female group maintained "...the Small One (*assistant*) probably gets bossed around a lot by the blonde one...she might not really want to bully but still plays a big part..." (1/3G). Furthermore, one male group drew attention to manipulation of the assistant suggesting, "The leader uses the followers" (2/2B). Furthermore, group accounts focus on the perception that the assistant complies with the leader. One male group suggested, "He obeys the leader" (2/2B). A female group stated "...she does what



the leader tells her to...she gets told what to do by the leader, and she does the things that bully the girl...she doesn't think just does what leader tells her to do" (2/3G). Indeed, one female group claimed that the assistant liked being compliant "Blonde like to follow instructions" (2/1G). On the other hand, one male group suggested that the assistant wanted to take control to rectify unfair treatment suggesting "He wants to take his revenge because he wants to take over...he wants to be in charge" (2/1B). Another group drew attention to the assistant's sense of his own power: "Thinks they won't get bullied...thinks he has authority" (1/1B).

In addition, a female group drew attention to violations of fairness in terms of the scapegoat role assigned to the assistant. They suggested the assistant "Could get the blame a lot with the teachers...she might be the girl to get caught – by doing all the things to the bullied girl...the small one is getting told off while the other two went round the corner laughing" (1/3G).

#### *8.2.2.4 Summary.*

In reading for participants' understanding of bullying in school in terms of interpersonal relationships from the perspective of the assistant, participants express their accounts using both justice and care concerns. Reading for care concerns highlights attachment and detachment issues, and concerns of isolation and disconnection. Evidence for justice concerns is also present in the group accounts of the assistant, with the focus on transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour and violations of fairness.

Reading for interpersonal relationships with regard to school bullying from the assistant's perspective reflects the evidence that two moral voices are present in the group accounts and, at times, certain phrases can provide evidence for either consideration. For example, "The slave girl might not want to be a bully anymore but she might be scared to go and play with her (*victim*) because of the head girl" (1/1G) can refer either to the assistant's desire to make friends with the new girl (care orientation), or to the sense that she experiences the leader's behaviour as oppressive and dominating (justice orientation). Furthermore, "She does what she's told by the main bully so she doesn't get bullied" (1/3G) can allude either to the nature of the assistant's attachment to the bully group, that is, participants perceive that it offers protection from victimization (care orientation), or to the perception that she experiences the leader's behaviour as oppressive and dominating (justice orientation). Reading for care, the reader could assume that these statements reflect the groups' observations about the nature of the assistant's attachment with the leader. Then again, reading for justice, their statements indicate an understanding that the assistant experiences the leader's behaviour as violating morally acceptable standards of behaviour.

### 8.2.3 *Follower Bully*

#### 8.2.3.1 *Reading 1: Reading for a general understanding.*

For the first reading of the flipchart outputs, I paid attention to the participants' suggestion of names for the follower bully character. Groups put forward a number of names for this character, which primarily reflected their perception of the tentative, yet supportive role of the follower in the bullying process ("follower II" 2/2B, "tagger" 1/1G, "tagging along" 1/3G, "back-up bully" 2/1G, "follower" 2/3G).

In addition, a couple of male group accounts alluded to the deferential nature of the role (“slave” 1/1B, “scrape”<sup>1</sup> 2/1B). Furthermore, the perception that the follower had previously been victimized (“a bullied bully” 1/2B) was highlighted.

This reading draws attention to the nature of the role of the follower in the bullying process in terms of their behaviour that serves to reinforce the bullying. Male group discussions focus on behaviour such as being forced to take part in the bullying, copying the bullies, obeying the leader and taking the blame for the bullies’ behaviour. Analysis of the female group discussions highlights behaviours such as tagging along with the bullies, watching, laughing, smiling, smirking, and sticking up for the bullies.

With regard to moral reasoning and understanding others’ emotions, focus group discussions predominantly focused on the follower’s fear associated with being involved. That is, fear of the leader (e.g., “Scared of bully so joined the group” 1/1B), fear of being bullied (e.g., “Scared of being bullied” 2/2B), fear of participating in the bullying process (e.g., “He scared to do things” 2/1B), fear of the consequences of participating in bullying (e.g., “Scared she’s gonna get caught” 1/3G) and fear of isolation (e.g., “Tagging along – maybe scared – wants to fit in – feels she will be left out if she does not bully the new girl” 1/3G). Less frequently, worry was attributed to the follower (e.g., “Worried in case they get in trouble” 1/1B).

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<sup>1</sup> “To get on terms of acquaintance *with* by careful effort and insinuation” (Oxford University Press, 2007).



This reading also highlights a number of inconsistencies in the groups' accounts of the follower. For example, one female group described the follower as both "Mean and nice" (2/2G). Furthermore, another female group claimed that the follower "Doesn't really do anything" (1/1G). Conversely, they claimed that "The Tagger has to be small and quick, and she uses the other girl as a distraction so she can do the crime...The Tagger uses the slave (*assistant*) to threaten the new girl to do things" (1/1G).

#### 8.2.3.2 Reading 2: *Reading for care.*

The second reading for care concerns highlights attachment and detachment issues and draws attention to an awareness of the harm caused by bullying:

He's on the sidelines...not much part in it...going along with it...He wants to be cool so he joined the group by accident...Scared of bully so he joined the group...He thinks that if he's with the bully he's safe...He might think he can use the bullies to hurt people he doesn't like...If you can't beat them join them sort of thing (1/1B)

He doesn't really want to be a bully. He's hanging back a bit! (1/2B)

In the gang so he will stop getting bullied (2/1B)

He doesn't know what's going on. He might go off...he is a wimp because he don't know what's going on...waiting behind everyone because he don't like it, embarrassed...he don't take part of bullying (2/2B)

Dumb kid don't know what he is doing (2/3B)

The Tagger is sneaky. She's always smiling or laughing. And she's a distraction...The Tagger has to be sneaky but she doesn't really do anything. She just watches and laughs...She is tagging along with the bullies' group and I think she got worse and worse until she turned into a bit of a bully...The Tagger is the one who kind of tags along and is really sneaky about everything...The Tagger is sneaky and sly but isn't in charge of the group so she just tags along...The Tagger is quite sneaky and she wants to be in the bullies' group because they are popular...I don't think she gets bossed about as much as the slave. She just wants to play with them to look cool...She is tagging along with the head girl and the blonde girl because she wants to hang out with them because they are cool and popular so the tagging girl wants to be cool and popular as well...The Tagger wants to be friends with the head girl because she is popular (1/1G)

Followers are usually against bullying, but are too scared to stand up for themselves (1/2G)

Trying to fit in...Tagging along...Tagging along – she douse not want to bully the girl but if she duse not want to be like the girl...Doesn't feel like she's one of the group...Tagging along – maybe scared – wants to fit in – feels she will be left out if she does not bully the new girl (1/3G)

The small girl wants to do something without actually doing anything (back up)...The small girl probably don't want to bully the girl who is getting bullied because she probably feels sorry for the girl who's getting bullied...The small girl probably feels sorry for the girl because she knows how it feels...Joins in 'cos she doesn't want to get bullied (2/1G)

She's not bullying Sophie (*victim*) much...Doesn't want to bully Sophie...Feeling sorry for Sophie (*victim*)!...She wants to be Sophie's (*victim*'s) friend...She want to be Sophie's (*victim*'s) friend but she might get bullied by her friends...Wants to be her friend (2/2G)

Sneaky, sticking up for the bullies when they are in trouble. She dips in and out...Follower. She follows the gang. She doesn't want to get in trouble so she sneakily smirks. It is like she dips in and then dips out (2/3G)

Reading for interpersonal relationships from a care perspective draws attention to attachment and detachment issues in terms of how the follower's connection to the bully group is defined. The follower's role is perceived as intermittent. For example, one female group suggested that this character "dips in and out" (2/3G), detached, for example, one male group suggested that, "He's on the sidelines...not much part in it...going along with it" (1/1B), and minimally involved (e.g., "He...waiting behind everyone because he don't like it...he don't take part of bullying" 1/2B). While half the focus groups indicated that the follower character was perceived as holding anti-bullying attitudes (e.g., "Followers are usually against bullying" 1/2G), reading for care concerns draws attention to a number of perceived



reasons why the follower might be motivated to join the bully group. These include protection from victimization (e.g., “In the gang so he will stop getting bullied” 2/1B) and the perceived coolness and popularity that membership of such a group offers (e.g., “The Tagger wants to be friends with the head girl because she is popular” 1/1G). In addition, male group discussions cited the provision of safety from other people that the group offers (“He thinks that if he’s with the bully he’s safe” 1/1B). Female group discussions mentioned fear of the leader (e.g., “Followers are usually against bullying, but are too scared to stand up for themselves” 1/2G) and fear of being isolated from the group (e.g., “Fears she will be left out if she does not bully the new girl” 1/3G). Furthermore, one group advocated that the follower was resigned to a relationship with the bully group since “If you can’t beat them join them sort of thing” (1/1B). On the other hand, one group suggested that the follower wants to make a new attachment with the victim but is motivated by fear not to do so, saying “She want to be Sophie’s (*victim*’s) friend but she might get bullied by her friends” (2/2G).

Reading of the female group discussions suggests that the follower is aware of the negative effect of the bullying on the victim. One female group cited that “The small girl probably don’t want to bully the girl who is getting bullied because she probably feels sorry for the girl who’s getting bullied...The small girl probably feels sorry for the girl because she knows how she feels” (2/1G). On the other hand, reading of the female group discussions also indicates a lack of care toward the victim in terms of the pleasure gained from joining in with the bullying. One group stated, “The Tagger is sneaky. She’s always smiling or laughing. And she’s a distraction...The Tagger has to be sneaky but she doesn’t really do anything. She just watches and

laughs” (1/1G). Furthermore, analysis of one male group discussion highlights the perception that the follower is unaware of the bullying, “He doesn’t know what’s going on...he is a wimp because he don’t know what’s going on” (2/2B).

#### 8.2.3.3 *Reading 3: Reading for justice.*

In the third reading, attention is drawn to issues of moral choice, justification for bullying behaviour, transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour and violations of fairness:

Makes him do things...Does everything the bully wants...He wants to be cool so he joined the group by accident and now is always getting blamed...Works for them...Afraid...Forced...Scared of bully...Scared... Scared of bully so he joined the group...Worried in case they get into trouble...Frightened that if he does not do what bully says he will get hurt...Made to do things that he doesn’t want to...Conned him into it so that they can blame it on someone...When bullies get in trouble the slave gets the blame...The bully gets him into trouble...If you can’t beat them join them sort of thing...Is probably there so he can take blame if they are caught (1/1B)

A bullied bully does whatever the big bully ones says (slave)...He is forced to be a bully or he will get creamed (as in “walk this way”)...He’s forced to be a bully...He doesn’t really want to be a bully. He’s hanging back a bit (1/2B)

He does not like what he is doing...Scared to stand up...He scared to do things (2/1B)

Scared of being bullied (2/2B)

Does all the dirty work...Gets in trouble because of the tall black one...Takes the blame for the others...Unaware he is doing things naughty...

Scared...Told what to do...Forced to do the dirty work...Being used...Does everything he is told to do (2/3B)

She is probably still quite scared of the other two (1/1G)

Followers are usually against bullying, but are too scared to stand up for themselves...People who are bullies sometimes are bullies because they have been bullied or they have trouble at home, like their parents were bullying them (1/2G)

Tagging along – she douse not want to bully the girl but if she duse not want to be like the girl...Scared she's gonna get caught..."I do not want to do that"...She might think that she will get caught by a teacher...She wants to be like them but does not want to bully (1/3G)

The small girl wants to do something without actually doing anything (back up)...Little girl doesn't really want to do bullying anymore...On the outside



the small girl bullies, but in the inside she is scared...The small girl with the glasses is scared and she doesn't want to bully the new girl (2/1G)

Doesn't want to bully Sophie (*victim*)...Scared...She's feeling she might be doing the wrong thing...They might get in trouble...She don't want to get in trouble (2/2G)

Reading for interpersonal relationships from a justice perspective focuses attention on two moral voices, one that reflects what the follower would like to do (not be involved in bullying) and one that is informed by the follower's actual behaviour (taking part in bullying). Thus, while participants perceive that the follower is unhappy about his or her involvement in the bullying process, they also perceive that the follower feels unable to stand up for him- or herself. One male group stated "He does not like what he is doing...scared to stand up...He scared to do things" (2/1B) and one female group suggested, "Followers are usually against bullying, but are too scared to stand up for themselves" (1/2G). According to this reading, the follower resolves this moral dilemma by justifying his or her participation in bullying as a form of protection against being treated unfairly by the leader. Thus, while analysis of the group discussions demonstrates the follower's anti-bullying attitudes, it also highlights his or her fear of the consequences to the self if he or she does not obey the leader. One group suggested "'I do not want to do that'...she might think that she will get caught by a teacher...she wants to be like them but does not want to bully" (1/3G). Another suggested that the follower was "Scared of bully so he joined the group...worried in case they get in to trouble...frightened that if he does not do what bully says he will get hurt" (1/1B).

Indeed, reading for justice concerns highlights the perception that the follower experiences the leader's behaviour as violating morally acceptable standards of behaviour. One male group held that the follower is "Forced to be a bully or he will get creamed (as in "walk this way")...he's forced to be a bully...he doesn't really want to be a bully. He's hanging back a bit" (1/2B). A female group stated that the follower "...doesn't really want to do bullying anymore...on the outside the small girl bullies, but in the inside she is scared...the small girl with the glasses is scared and she doesn't want to bully the new girl" (2/1G). Furthermore, analysis of the male group discussions focuses attention on the perception that the follower complies with the leader, for example, one group claimed that the follower "Does everything he is told to do" (2/3B).

In addition, analysis of the male group discussions draws attention to violations of fairness in terms of the scapegoat role assigned to the follower. One group held that the follower "Does all the dirty work...gets in trouble because of the tall black one...takes the blame for the others" (2/3B). Moreover, reading for justice concerns highlights the perception that the follower's behaviour is justified since it rectifies a previous injustice namely being bullied at home. One female group states, "People who are bullies sometimes are bullies because they have been bullied or they have trouble at home, like their parents were bullying them" (1/2G).

#### *8.2.3.4 Summary.*

In reading for participants' understanding of bullying in school in terms of interpersonal relationships from the perspective of the follower, participants express their accounts using both justice and care concerns. Reading for care concerns

highlights attachment and detachment issues, and highlights awareness of the harm caused by bullying. Evidence for justice concerns is also present in the group accounts of the follower, with the focus on issues of moral choice, transgressions of morally acceptable standards of behaviour, violations of fairness and justification for bullying behaviour.

Reading for interpersonal relationships with regard to school bullying from the follower's perspective reflects the evidence that two moral voices are present in the group accounts and, at times, certain phrases can provide evidence for either perspective. For example, "The small girl wants to do something without actually doing anything (back up)" (2/1G) can refer either to the follower's ambivalent attachment to the bully group (care orientation), or to the moral dilemma of conflicting concerns between actual behaviour and desired behaviour (justice orientation). Moreover, "He doesn't really want to be a bully. He's hanging back a bit" (1/2B) can allude either to a sense of detachment from the bully group (care orientation), or to the moral dilemma of conflicting concerns between actual behaviour and desired behaviour (justice orientation). Reading for care, the reader could assume that these statements reflect the groups' observations about the nature of the follower's attachment to the bully group. Then again, reading for justice, their statements indicate an understanding that the follower experiences a moral dilemma between actual and desired behaviour during the bullying process.

### *8.3 Summary*

This chapter presented the results of an analysis of the focus group discussion data, collected during Study 2. In seeking to explore children's representations of each of



the hypothetical characters in the bully group using focus group discussions combined with a structured research activity, participants revealed a wealth of rich detail regarding the social group context within which school bullying takes place. Analysis drew attention to the hierarchical nature of the bully group, the types of behaviour engaged in by each of the bully characters, the nature of the attachments among members of the bully group, motives for engaging in bullying others and justification for engaging in bullying others.

All focus group accounts drew attention to the hierarchical structure of the bully group, identifying three key roles: leader, assistant and follower. Each member of the group was ascribed with a distinct function within the group in terms of characteristics and behaviours. Participants described the role of the leader bully in terms of his or her pro-active, leader-like behaviour. Participants primarily focused on the bully's sense of power and authority, that is, his or her dominating and oppressive behaviours, such as taking control, giving orders and initiating bullying episodes. Furthermore, analysis drew attention to the coercive, threatening and intimidating nature of the bully's behaviour toward other members of the group. Both male and female participants identified behaviours such as threatening other group members to follow him or her, telling other members what to do, and forcing other members to do what he or she wants. In terms of specific bullying behaviours perpetrated by the leader, male participants focused attention on direct physical aggression such as fighting, physical restraint, stealing others' money or belongings, and hurting others, and direct verbal aggression, such as blackmail, teasing, threatening, swearing and shouting. On the other hand, female participants highlighted the leader's direct verbal aggression, such as threatening others, picking

on people who were different, swearing and using rude words, watching and laughing, and indirect aggression, such as ignoring others and social exclusion.

With regard to the assistant character, analysis of the focus group data highlighted participants' perception that he or she played an active role in bullying episodes. The assistant's behaviour was perceived as supportive of the leader in terms of offering assistance, encouragement and providing support by "tagging along". Male participants highlighted behaviours such as restraining the victim and threatening others, while female participants focused on making fun of the victim. In addition, participants perceived that this character experienced the leader's behaviour as dominating and oppressive through, for example, feeling forced to bully others, obeying the leader and taking the blame. Furthermore, the assistant was also perceived as experiencing the leaders' behaviour as threatening and intimidating, in terms of taking part in bullying others out of fear of the leader.

In terms of the follower character, overall his or her role in the group was perceived by participants to be detached, with participation in bullying others perceived as intermittent and minimal. Female participants described behaviours that reinforced the bullying, such as tagging along, watching, laughing, smiling, smirking and sticking up for the bully. Male participants perceived that the follower character experienced the leader's behaviour as the assistant character did, that is, dominating and intimidating through, for example, being forced to take part, obeying the leader and taking the blame. In addition, male participants also perceived that the follower copied the leader.

Analysis of the focus group discussions drew attention to the nature of the attachments and interpersonal relationships among members of the bully group and their motivation for participation in bullying. Generally, participants perceived that connection with the group offered protection of some kind for each of the bully characters. Male participants perceived that the leader's attachments were motivated by the safety that having followers and "backup" offered. In addition, male and female participants perceived that friendships offered the leader protection from the consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour. Furthermore, female participants perceived that the leader's attachment with others was motivated by a desire for friendship and as a means of reducing loneliness. In terms of the assistant and follower, male participants perceived that these character's attachments to the leader were motivated by the need for safety, and protection from others. In addition, male participants cited improved status as a motive for the assistant's attachment to the bully group. Male and female participants cited wanting to be cool as a motive for the follower's attachment, while females cited wanting to be part of the bully group because of the group's popularity.

In taking the leader's perspective, engaging in bullying others was justified by participants in terms of rectifying previous unfair treatment that the leader had experienced. Whereas male discussions focused on general unfair treatment experienced at home, females focused on unfair treatment in terms of the leader's previous experience of being bullied.

From the follower's perspective, his or her bullying behaviour was justified in terms of rectifying previous unfair treatment, namely being bullied at home. Furthermore,



analysis of the participants' accounts of the follower directed attention to two moral voices, one that reflected how the follower would like to behave (i.e., not be involved in bullying) and one that reflected how he or she was perceived to behave (i.e., taking part in bullying others). While analysis of the group discussions demonstrated the follower's anti-bullying attitudes, including in one case the desire to befriend the victim, and the awareness of the negative effects of bullying on the victim, it also highlighted participants' perception that the follower feared the personal consequences if he or she did not obey the leader. Thus, while the follower was perceived as unhappy about his or her involvement in the bullying process, participants perceived that the follower was also afraid to stand up for him- or herself. According to participants, the follower character resolved this incongruence between thought and action by justifying his or her participation in bullying as a form of protection against being treated unfairly by the leader.

This chapter presented the results of a qualitative analysis of focus group discussions using an adapted version of the voice-centred relational method (Brown et al., 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Brown et al., 1989) to explore children's representations of individual members of the bully group. Not only did this study reveal gender differences in children's representations of each of the bully characters, this study provided rich detail regarding their understanding of bullying in primary school in terms of interpersonal relationships and peer processes. Analysis revealed children's understanding of the hierarchical structure of the bully group, embodying a system of dominance whereby the high-status leader exerted control over other members and their behaviour. Furthermore, the results of this study demonstrated children's rich understanding of the complex nature of the attachments among members of the

group and their motivations and justifications for engaging in bullying others. The next and final chapter will critically discuss the combined results of Studies 1 and 2 in terms of the literature reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2, paying particular attention to those results that were unexpected or did not concur fully with findings from previous research.

## CHAPTER 9

### Main Discussion

#### *9.1. Overview*

The overall aim of the present programme of research was to engage children as active participants in the research process in order to explore meaningfully their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices. Following an extensive literature review, a number of initial aims were proposed and explored in the Exploratory Study. As a consequence of the findings from the Exploratory Study, child friendly information materials were developed subsequent studies. Given that the findings of the Exploratory Study were discussed in Chapter 4 (see Section 4.4, p. 140), the present chapter begins by discussing the main findings as they relate to the aims for the main programme of research, making reference to specific Exploratory Study findings where necessary. This will be followed by an exploration of the possible methodological limitations with suggestions for future research. Finally, the implications for school-based interventions to address school bullying will be discussed prior to the presentation of a concluding summary.

#### *9.2 Main Findings*

The following sections discuss the main findings with reference to the literature reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2. Particular attention will be paid to those results that were unexpected or did not concur fully with findings from previous research. Given the relatively small sample, interpretations of the present findings are made with



caution. Nevertheless, the discussion presented below might stimulate future research that will lend further support to these results.

### *9.2.1 Children's Causal Understanding of the Bullying Relationship*

In response to questions about why bullying might happen in primary school and what its causes might be, analysis of the interview transcripts revealed four main categories: bully-focused (bully's emotions, bully not knowing victim, bully's past negative experience, the inevitable existence of bullies, bully's previous bullying of others, bully's aggressive tendencies), victim-focused (victim's newness and difference, victim's lack of knowledge of bullies, victim's previous victimization), peer-relationship focused (group membership, previous argument/encounter), and school-focused (school practices).

Previous research confirms these categories as a means of explaining the causes of bullying. For example, other studies have identified victim-related, bully-related, the bully-victim relationship (Almeida, Marques et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2004) and the social system (peer group, school, society) categories. In the present study, the most frequently mentioned reasons for explaining the causes of bullying were bully-focused (the bully's emotions, the bully not knowing the victim, the bully's past negative experience, the inevitable existence of bullies, the bully's previous bullying of others, the bully's aggressive tendencies). This finding concurs with research conducted in Europe in which a study of children and adolescents' reasons for bullying in relation to hypothetical scenarios demonstrated that the most mentioned causal explanation of bullying was the bully (Almeida, Marques, et al., 2001). In contrast, when drawing upon actual bullying situations, secondary school victims'

more often cited victim-related causes of bullying (Smith et al., 2004). While this age-related difference may be explained in terms of developmental changes, it is possible that the reasons children give for explaining bullying depend on whether they have been victimized or not. The tendency to self-blame may be a means of taking some responsibility for the victimization in an attempt to create an illusion of control over the situation (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005). On the other hand, the propensity for children to mention bully-focused reasons in the present study may demonstrate an inclination to attribute blame to others for school bullying that acts to protect or enhance self-esteem, and which serves to distance the individual from responsibility for bullying others.

### *9.2.2 Children's General Emotional Attributions in Relation to School Bullying*

In terms of general emotional attributions, the results from Study 1 demonstrated that negative emotions (sadness, neglect, fear) were most commonly attributed to the new boy or girl with the bullying behaviour cited as the main reason for the attributions. Positive emotions (cheerfulness, pride) were most often attributed to the bullies with enjoyment of bullying and desirable outcomes commonly cited as reasons for these attributions. Mixed emotions (cheerfulness, shame) were most often attributed to those characters identified by participants as the followers, with enjoyment of bullying and regret, respectively, cited as reasons for these attributions. Previous research with children and adolescents in Canada and Europe, drawing on both actual bullying experiences and hypothetical scenarios respectively, has found similar general emotional attributions to bullies and victims. In these previous studies, negative emotions (rejected, sadness, fear, embarrassed, ashamed) have been attributed to victims, and positive emotions (happiness, pride) have been attributed to

the bullies (Bosacki et al., 2006; del Barrio et al., 2003). That participants attributed mixed general emotions to those characters identified as followers has not been previously documented and, as such, the present findings extend our knowledge regarding children's understanding of general emotions in relation to school bullying that go beyond the bully/victim dyad.

In attributing cheerfulness to the bullies and followers, enjoyment of bullying was the most commonly cited reason for this attribution, with other studies reporting similar findings. For example, in a study of children's pictorial and narrative representations of their bullying experiences, Bosacki et al. (2006) found that the majority of bullies were depicted as enjoying themselves while in the act of hurting another child. In a study of children and adolescents, the majority of participants attributed happiness to the bully in a hypothetical bullying scenario (del Barrio et al., 2003). This notion of a cheerful bully is consistent with the concept of a 'happy victimizer' identified in the literature (e.g., Arsenio & Kramer, 1992; Nunner-Winkler & Sodian, 1988). That participants in the present study perceived that bullies might feel happy for bullying others demonstrates an emotional response that is incongruent with the victim's perceived emotional state and may suggest that participants perceived that aggressors experience a lack of empathy towards their victims.

In contrast, in stepping into the role of the bullies, participants were more likely to attribute shame, anger and sadness to the self than to cite positive emotions. This difference between attributions to the self as bully and to a hypothetical bully is supported by similar findings from previous research, which demonstrated that in



taking the role of the bullies, participants' attribution of positive emotions was substantially less frequent than when they made attributions to a hypothetical bully (del Barrio et al., 2003). Despite attributing positive emotions to a hypothetical bully in the present study, far from suggesting children are immoral, or amoral, this self-other split indicates that the participants were able to distinguish between actual emotional experiences of the self and hypothesized emotional perspectives of others (del Barrio et al., 2003; Keller, Lourenço, Malti, & Saalbach, 2003).

### *9.2.3 Children's Moral Attributions in Relation to School Bullying*

Turning to moral attributions, worry was most often attributed to the victim: for fear of threat or harm from the bullies, for anticipation of future danger or harm from the bullies, for not knowing what to do in the bullying situation, for not feeling welcome, for making the wrong impression upon others, for feeling unsafe, and for getting into trouble. To a lesser extent, shame was also attributed to the victim: for the actual experience of being bullied, for offending the bullies, for feeling humiliated, for their appearance, for the choice of new school, and for not defending him- or herself. Participants most often attributed indifference (for perpetrating bullying behaviours, for previous experience of bullying, for feeling "big" and "cool", for finding bullying funny, for thinking it's okay to bully, for not knowing what they're doing, for not knowing what it's like to be bullied) and pride (for engagement in bullying, for being the leader, for feeling "cool", for not caring, for smoking, for feeling victorious, for finding bullying funny, for not being the victim, for previous experience of bullying, and for thinking they will not get caught) to the bully. The follower's emotions were mostly characterized by worry (for fear of consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour, for not being fully engaged in the bullying, for feeling sorry for the

victim, for anticipation of the continuation of the bullying, for the intensity of the bullying) and shame (for ambivalence regarding their participation in the bullying, for not really wanting to participate, for knowing bullying behaviour is wrong, as a form of protection, for being a part of the bully group, for knowing what it was like to be the victim). Previous research nevertheless lends partial support to these findings. For example, Almeida, Marques et al.'s (2001) unpublished validation study of the *SCAN* bullying cartoons demonstrated that 11-year-olds most often attributed pride and, to a lesser extent, indifference to a hypothetical bully, while shame was mostly attributed to a hypothetical victim. That participants attributed worry and shame to the follower character has not been previously documented and, therefore, the present findings enhance researchers' knowledge regarding children's understanding of others' moral emotions with regard to school bullying that go beyond the bully/victim dyad.

That the participants in the present study most often attributed worry to the victim suggests that they perceived the bullying behaviours depicted in the hypothetical story to be threatening and harmful. According to Shaver et al. (2001), the experience of worry begins with an interpretation of events as potentially dangerous or threatening to the self (e.g., the anticipation of physical harm, loss, rejection or failure). This combined with a set of situational factors such as an unfamiliar environment and being alone, is likely to increase an individual's perceived vulnerability to threat and reduce his or her chances of coping successfully. Thus, the results in the present study suggest that participants perceived situational factors, such as the victim's unfamiliarity with the new school and the victims' aloneness, as possibly increasing the new boy or girl's vulnerability to bullying behaviour and



hampering his or her chances of addressing it effectively. In addition, it could be argued that, in line with Olweus' (1994) definition of bullying, the attribution of worry to the victim intimates that participants observed a power imbalance between the victim and the bullies and perceived the physical, emotional or social well-being of the victim to be under threat and/or attack, such that the victim was perceived to be unable to defend him- or herself.

In attributing shame to the victim the results of the present study suggest that participants may have been aware of the negative impact that being bullied would have on the bullies' and other observers' opinion of the new boy or girl (Ferguson, Stegge, & Damhuis, 1991), and a consequent loss of self-esteem and threat to the victim's feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy (Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 2001). Furthermore, in perceiving that the victim had offended the bullies in some way, the attribution of shame for committing a social blunder, such as wearing the wrong uniform or falling over, may have reflected participants' awareness of the victim's breach of social norms and the consequent impression that such behaviour would make on others (Ferguson et al., 1991).

In attributing indifference and pride to the bullies in the hypothetical story, the present findings suggest an attitude of moral disengagement from the detrimental effects that bullying behaviour had on the victim, such that desirable outcomes and personal achievements (e.g., increased power and status) were sufficient to justify bullying from the bully's perspective (Menesini et al., 2003). In addition, an absence of the expression of negative emotions may demonstrate a deactivation of moral controls in order for the hypothetical bully to justify their negative behaviour,



revealing a lack of empathy towards the victim (Menesini et al., 2003). Since pride maintains the respect of oneself and others (Saarni, Mumme, & Campos, 1998) and regulates and maintains self-esteem, its expression serves to draw attention to the bully and alerts others in the social group that he or she merits increased dominance and status (Tracy & Robins, 2004). That participants in the present study most often attributed pride to the bullies for their bullying behaviour might suggest an awareness that the expression of pride in a bullying situation brings social success for the bullies in terms of personal and social gains and advantages (Menesini et al., 2003) such as increased power and higher status (Tracy & Robins, 2004).

That participants attributed worry to the follower is interesting. While participants' responses demonstrate the follower's concern for the victim (feeling sorry, worrying about the continuation of the bullying, worrying about the intensity of the bullying), their responses also suggest an awareness that the follower feared the personal consequences of their bullying behaviour more than they feared the consequences of their actions on the victim (Manning & Bear, 2002). Indeed, some of the participants in this study perceived the follower's behaviour to be justified, because it offered protection against becoming the next victim, suggesting that such behaviour was deemed personally and socially acceptable through a process of moral disengagement, that is, in terms of personal gain (Bandura, 1999). Conversely, some participants' citing of empathic reasons for attributing worry to the follower demonstrates an emotional response that was congruent with the victim's perceived emotional state (Fabes, Eisenberg, & Eisenbud, 1993), suggesting an attitude of moral responsibility toward the victim (Menesini et al., 2003).

Since research demonstrates that children feel shame when they engage in behaviours that transgress moral norms (e.g., causing property damage or personal injury) (Ferguson et al., 1991), the results of the present study intimate that in attributing shame to the follower participants perceived that this character's involvement in bullying had breached moral standards (Ahmed, 2006). Taken together, the attributions of worry and shame to the hypothetical follower in the present study contrasts with the findings of a study to investigate actual bullies', assistants' and reinforcers' understanding of moral emotions in relation to their participant role in bullying, which was assessed using an Italian version of Salmivalli et al.'s (1996) *Participant Role Scale* (Gini, 2006). Gini's (2006) study found that actual assistants and reinforcers, not dissimilar in role to the hypothetical followers in the present study, shared the same tendency as bullies to activate moral disengagement mechanisms that allowed the use of aggressive behaviour (Gini, 2006). That participants in the present study tended to attribute emotions such as worry and shame to the follower in the present study suggests a perception that this character recognizes the harm suffered by the victim, and indicates an attitude of moral responsibility for engaging in negative behaviour (Gini, 2006).

When participants in the present study were asked whether they could feel worried/ashamed/indifferent/proud if they were one of the characters in the hypothetical story, they mostly cited worry in taking the role of the victim, shame and to a lesser extent worry in taking the role of the bully, and shame in taking the role of the follower. That the emotional attributions to the self as victim and follower are similar to those attributed to the hypothetical victim and follower, and that the emotional attributions to the self as bully are different to those attributed to



the hypothetical bully, supports the view that children perceive bullying as having powerfully mixed emotional consequences depending on one's role in the event (Arsenio & Kramer, 1992). When taking the role of the victim and the follower in the present study, that the participants' attributions were similar to a hypothetical victim and a hypothetical follower suggests that they share these character's feelings, that is, they empathize with the emotional states of both the victim and the follower in the story (Eisenberg, 2000). On the other hand, when stepping into the role of the bully, participants attributed shame and worry to the self, attributions that contrast with the emotions of moral disengagement (pride, indifference) previously ascribed to the hypothetical bully in the story. This finding concurs with previous research that has shown that children attribute more negative emotions to the self as aggressor than to a hypothetical aggressor (e.g., del Barrio et al., 2003; Keller et al., 2003). This suggests that participants were able to differentiate themselves from the hypothetical bully and reject the bully's moral disengagement regarding the bullying behaviours (Keller et al., 2003).

Participants in the present study perceived that the victim would feel more worried in the blackmail vignette (for being physically threatened), the social isolation vignette (for anticipating that the bullying was going to get worse), the real damage to personal possessions vignette (due to the consequences of the book being damaged); more shame in the social isolation vignette (for being "all alone"), the group physical attack vignette (for falling over and feeling humiliated), and the blackmail vignette (for acquiescing to the bullies' request). Participants perceived that the bullies would feel more pride in the real damage to personal possessions (for the victim's books being cut up) and the group physical attack vignette (for the victim falling over with



the group observing), and more indifferent in the neutral vignette (they have not yet started bullying the victim).

The findings presented here suggest that, in perceiving that the victim would feel more worried in the blackmail vignette, the participants made different moral judgments about the severity of the different types of bullying behaviours depicted in the hypothetical story. This concurs with previous research with primary school children, which found that participants rated physical aggression as more wrong and harmful than relational aggression (Murray-Close et al., 2006) and which demonstrated that causing physical harm to another was considered a more severe moral transgression than stealing or lying (Nunner-Winkler & Sodian, 1988). That participants cited the victim would feel more shame in the social isolation vignette for being “all alone”, might have been perceived to be provoked not just by the act of bullying itself, but also by the lack of friendships and notions of rejection implicit in the hypothetical story (Gilligan & Wiggins, 1988). Furthermore, it could be argued that in attributing more shame to the victim in the group physical attack vignette, participants associated shame with the additional negative feelings of humiliation and embarrassment (Ferguson et al., 1991). In citing that victims would feel more shame in the blackmail vignette for acquiescing to the bullies’ request, it could be argued that participants also judged the bullies’ behaviour as abusive, and viewed the victim’s compliance with the bullies’ demands in a negative light (Shaw & Wainryb, 2006).

Participants’ attribution of more pride to the bullies in episodes that involved damage to personal possessions and physical aggression, might indicate that participants

considered that the bully felt satisfied with his or her performance (Menesini et al., 2003) since causing physical harm to another is considered more serious than lying or stealing (Nunner-Winkler & Sodian, 1988). Given that the hypothetical vignettes used in the present study incorporated the social group context in which bullying takes place, it could be argued that as physical aggression and physical damage to property are more visible than, for example, teasing, feeling more pride in these scenarios was due to the perception that, in the presence of an audience, such behaviours might draw attention to the bully and alert others that he or she deserves increased status (Tracy & Robins, 2004).

#### *9.2.4 Coping Strategies Children Consider Using to Address School Bullying*

One of the main aims of the present study was to explore the coping strategies that primary school children consider using to address bullying in school. Seeking social support emerged as the preferred style of coping, with the majority of participants stating that in the event of being bullied they would tell an adult. The next most preferred coping strategies were directly addressing the bullies (“sorting things out”, making friends with the bullies) and avoidance (distancing, ignoring); least mentioned were finding other friends and verbal or physical retaliation.

Previous research confirms primary school children’s considered and actual use of these coping strategies in addressing school bullying. For example, research has shown that participants consider, and actively use, seeking social support (e.g., del Barrio et al., 2003; Hunter & Boyle, 2004; Kristensen & Smith, 2003; Smith et al., 2004), directly addressing the bullies (del Barrio et al., 2003; Oliver & Candappa, 2003), avoidance (del Barrio et al., 2003; Hunter & Boyle, 2004; Wilton et al., 2000)



and finding other friends (Oliver & Candappa, 2003). Studies with primary school children have also identified the use of verbal or physical retaliation as a means of coping with school bullying (Oliver & Candappa, 2003; Wilton et al., 2000).

Consistent with previous research, the preferred method of coping strategy that participants considered using in the present study was seeking adult social support. For example, in a cross-national study using the same methodology as the present study, del Barrio et al. (2003) found that 37% of children considered asking an adult for help. From a socio-cultural perspective, it could be argued that prevailing cultural practices and traditions reflect adult expectations of children's independence in Western society (Rogoff, 2003). Thus, in the present study, participants' assertions that they would seek social support from an adult may reflect children's ways of learning in schools and families that are organized hierarchically, that is, structures that emphasize adult supervision, control and authority and which minimize children's responsibility for taking care of themselves (Rogoff, 2003). An alternative explanation for the findings in the present study might be in terms of demand characteristics (Robson, 2002). Inadvertent cues on the part of the researcher may have influenced participants' responses in favour of citing seeking adult social support. In an attempt to establish credibility and professionalism as a researcher, my dress code was smart but casual, which may have had the effect of making my appearance resemble that of a teacher since participants asked permission and addressed me as "Miss", for example. Although participants were advised at the beginning of the interview that there were no right or wrong answers, this self-presentation cue may have inadvertently biased participants' responses in favour of citing adult social support because that is what they thought I wanted to hear.



Indeed, at the end of one interview one participant asked me which ending I thought would be the most probable ending and I said “adult social support”!

That similar numbers of males and females in the present study considered seeking social support is noteworthy as previous research contradicts this finding. For example, using a Danish sample of primary school children, Kristensen and Smith (2003) found that girls reported using this strategy significantly more than boys did. It has been argued that cultural expectations about acceptable behaviour, which favours or precludes certain types of coping strategy, and the surrounding social environment, may reinforce particular responses over others (Ólafsson & Jóhannsdóttir, 2004). In school, children learn not only from the formal, academic curriculum, they also learn ways of relating to each other, which are embodied in the social structure of their particular institution (Rogoff, 2003). It might be possible to explain the present finding in terms of each school’s cultural system. By participating in the everyday cultural practices, traditions and routines of their schools, children engage in the underlying moral assumptions particular to their institution. It could be argued that the cultural practices of the school community played a role in boys’ moral decision-making with regard to their choice of coping strategy. For example, in a study that explored the benefits of a peer support system in primary and secondary schools, Cowie (1998) found that pupils perceived that school was “a place where it was more acceptable to talk about emotional and relationship issues” (p. 116). Thus, it is possible that the participating schools in the present study offered structures and practices that created a cooperative climate in which male participants, as well as females, perceived that it was acceptable to consider seeking social support.

That participants in the present study considered directly addressing the bullies (“sorting things out with the bullies”, making friends with the bullies), concurs with previous research. For example, Oliver and Candappa (2003) found that primary school children considered trying to make friends with the bullies, telling the bullies how they felt, telling the bullies to stop and standing up to the bullies. Furthermore, in the present study, considerably more females considered directly addressing the bullies compared with males. Previous research investigating gender differences in styles of conflict resolution supports this finding (Österman et al., 1997). For example, Österman et al.’s (1997) study found that girls reported greater use of constructive resolution (“solves problems by trying to talk”, “finds peaceful solutions”, “manages to calm down the situation”) than did boys. Österman et al. (1997) suggest that this gender difference in coping styles can be explained in terms of the socialization experiences of females, which expects them to use more peaceful and socialized coping strategies than boys.

Avoidance, either in terms of physical distancing from the bullying situation or by ignoring the bullies, was the next most commonly considered coping strategy, a finding that concurs with previous research (del Barrio et al., 2003). It has been suggested that citing an avoidance strategy might indicate that children lack the confidence to consider the use of a more direct coping strategy in the event of being bullied (Kristensen & Smith, 2003). On the other hand, in a study of children’s actual coping strategies, Ólafsson (2003, cited in Ólafsson & Jóhannsdóttir, 2004) found that depending on the amount of bullying experienced non-bullied participants were more likely to consider using assertive and aggressive strategies, whereas those pupils who had experienced serious bullying were more likely to report using



avoidance strategies. It is possible, therefore, that in the present study, those participants who considered using avoidance as a coping strategy had themselves experienced previous victimization.

Previous research has identified finding other friends as a coping strategy with Oliver and Candappa (2003), for example, finding that nearly half of 11-year-olds had claimed that “staying close to friends in school” as a means of coping with bullying would “always” or “usually” work. In contrast, this strategy was least considered by participants in the present study. This is interesting given the protective qualities of friendships against victimization that have recently been documented (e.g., Boulton, Trueman, Chau, Whitehand, & Amatya, 1999; Pellegrini et al., 1999). Furthermore, a gender difference was apparent for this style of coping with solely females in the present study considering this strategy. This corresponds with Crick and Grotpeter’s (1996) finding that females reported significantly more prosocial support from peers than did boys. Therefore, that females in the present study exclusively cited finding other friends as a coping strategy may have depended on the degree to which they perceived that they would receive support from their peers. Alternatively, it might be that responses to victimization are linked to socialization and gender role differences (Gilligan, 1993), such as differences in aggressive and nurturing behaviour (Rogoff, 2003), that are modelled in children’s peer interactions (Corsaro, 1999). Thus, it could be argued that, as a means of coping, females seek out strategies associated with attachment and connection, in terms of creating new relationships (Wong & Csikszentmihalyi, 1991).



Few participants in the present study considered using verbal or physical retaliation, which corresponds with previous research using hypothetical vignettes portraying peer bullying (del Barrio, 2003). In contrast, observational research of the coping styles of actual victims of bullying found that verbal aggression and physical aggression accounted for 25% and 16% respectively of the total number of retaliatory coping responses observed (Wilton et al., 2000). Ólafsson's (2003, cited in Ólafsson & Jóhannsdóttir, 2004) findings suggested that the discrepancy between what non-victims claimed they would do if bullied compared with what victims actually do when bullied was related to the amount and intensity of the bullying experienced. Thus, non-victims were more likely to cite the use of assertive and aggressive strategies, whereas the seriously bullied reported using more passive and avoidance type strategies. It is possible, therefore, that the results of the present study suggest that participants fortunately had not experienced serious bullying.

#### *9.2.5 Emotional Release Strategies Children Consider Using to Address School Bullying*

In addition to exploring the coping strategies primary school children might consider using to address bullying in school, participants were asked about emotional release strategies, that is, what they could think or say to themselves to make themselves feel better. The analysis revealed a similar range of strategies to those identified for coping as discussed in the previous section. Cognitive-based strategies (reframing, bolstering) emerged as the overall preferred emotional release strategy. The next preferred emotional release strategies were avoidance (distancing, ignoring) and seeking social support; least mentioned were finding other friends, wishful thinking, directly addressing the bullies, doing nothing and retaliation. Since the

considerations of using avoidance, seeking social support, finding other friends, directly addressing the bullies and retaliation have been discussed in relation to coping strategies in the previous section, they will not be discussed further here.

Previous research has found that primary school children consider and use cognitive-based strategies (del Barrio et al., 2003; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002) and wishful thinking (del Barrio et al., 2003; Hunter & Boyle, 2004) for emotional release. Consistent with this previous research, the majority of participants in the present study considered the use of cognitive-based strategies in addressing bullying. Specifically, these strategies were reframing (minimizing the situation by selective interpretation of the events or by viewing the situation from a different perspective) and bolstering (making attempts to maintain a positive self-image). It has been suggested that cognitive-based strategies can be an effective means of coping since they demonstrate a positive attitude toward dealing with bullying which contrasts with passively accepting the situation (Talamelli & Cowie, 2001). Furthermore, in the current study a gender difference was apparent with more males than females citing this emotional release strategy. Wong and Csikszentmihalyi (1991) suggest that gender stereotypes and socialization experiences affect one's choice of actions. For example, in a study of children's coping strategies, Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner (2002) found that victimized boys played down the seriousness of peer conflicts, or affected nonchalance, which appeared to buffer them from low peer regard. It may be, therefore, that in citing cognitive-based strategies males in the present study were aware that such a strategy was associated with favourable social outcomes in terms of responses from the peer group.



A few participants considered using wishful thinking, a strategy that has been previously identified in the literature (del Barrio et al., 2003). Actual use of wishful thinking to address school bullying has been associated with a perceived lack of control over events (Hunter & Boyle, 2004). In the present study, therefore, it is possible that those participants who considered wishful thinking as an emotional release strategy may have perceived that in the event of being bullied they would have no control over the bullying situation and would wish that things were different.

Two female participants at St Nicholas School considered that there was nothing that could be done that would provide emotional release. That participants perceived that nothing could be done could be compared with the notion of helplessness identified in a study of how pupils cope with bullying (Talamelli & Cowie, 2001). Talamelli and Cowie (2001) suggest that helplessness can be a direct consequence of social exclusion and loneliness, indicating a passive attitude toward bullying that can appear to encourage it further. Cowie and Wallace (2000) argue that children raised in a cold and hostile emotional climate are more likely to grow up with a view of the world as frightening and threatening, and become either defensive and suspicious, or helpless in the face of personal difficulties. On the other hand, a warm and supportive emotional climate in the home is likely to produce children who are cooperative, and who adopt a problem-solving attitude towards interpersonal conflict. It might be that, in the present study, interpersonal relationships, such as those with the family, had the potential to shape participants' considered emotional release strategies to address bullying.



### *9.2.6 Children's Understanding of the Role of the Social Group Context in Which School Bullying Takes Place*

In seeking to explore children's understanding of the social group context in which school bullying takes place, the case study interviews and focus group discussions revealed a rich and illuminating wealth of detail regarding interpersonal relationships and peer processes in relation to involvement in bullying others, which broaden current understanding about school bullying. The following sections summarize and discuss the main elements of these results, with the key findings and discussion arranged under four main headings: bullying as a group process, interpersonal relationships and participation in bullying, justification for engaging in bullying others, and negative effects of bullying on the victim.

#### *9.2.6.1 Bullying as a group process.*

Analysis of the data revealed that the relationships among group members were characterized by an imbalance of power, such that the leader bully was perceived to exert his or her power and authority over other members of the group, while, in the main, the assistant and follower characters were observed to fulfil the leaders' demands. Indeed, Freema defined the bully group as a "gang" and Annie claimed that such a group exists in every school. These findings support the view that due to the behaviour and reputation of some of its members peers may perceive a particular sub-group of children as "the bunch of bullies" (Salmivalli, Huttunen, & Lagerspetz, 1997, p. 310).

While there is no direct evidence in the school bullying literature to support children's representation of a group structure that is clearly hierarchical, embodying

a system of dominance whereby the high-status leader exerts control over other members and their behaviour, these views are consistent with tangential research on preadolescent cliques (Adler & Adler, 1995). This research found that preadolescent cliques “embodied systems of dominance whereby individuals with more status and power exerted control over others’ lives” and used their power and authority to influence group membership and intragroup stratification (Adler & Adler, 1995, p. 149). In addition, a view of the leader exerting control over others supports the argument that bullies possess good social cognition and theory of mind skills, that is, the ability to understand and manipulate the thoughts, beliefs and desires of others (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999). Thus, it could be argued that such skills enable the leader to manipulate and organize assistants and followers to inflict harm on others on his or her behalf. Rogoff (2003) argues that such adversarial relations demonstrate a lack of respect for individual autonomy and self-determination and reflects a system of traditional leadership and organization in which one person attempts to control what others do. Thus, in schools, children learn not only the formal academic curriculum, they also learn about ways of relating with each other and co-ordinating their activities that reflect the hierarchical organizational and management structure of the institution (Rogoff, 2003). Furthermore, Rogoff (2003) emphasizes that the organization of institutions such as schools into age-grades has created a social structure that promotes competitiveness and reduces the opportunities for children to learn wider aspects of relating with others, such as cooperative role taking, responsibility, peer mentoring and managing conflict that interacting with younger and older children offers. Thus, it could be argued that school bullying perpetrated by hierarchically structured groups, as defined in the present study, is a response to the social structure of the school system. In describing



a structure that is clearly hierarchical, the participants in the present programme of research extend researchers' knowledge and understanding about bullying as a group process.

Furthermore, awareness of power differentials between the bully and the victim were apparent in most of the case study interviews with bullies observed to be taking advantage of perceived inequalities in terms of individual differences (e.g., appearance) or perceived status differences (e.g., "geeky" versus "popular" children, newcomers versus established pupils). Such perceptions are in keeping with the notion of a perceived power imbalance between the victim and the bully, as identified by previous research. For example, in a study of children's pictorial and narrative representations of their bullying experiences, the majority of participants depicted the bully as larger in size than the victim, which the authors suggested might represent perceptions of the bully's power (Bosacki et al., 2006). In citing perceived differences in social status, it could be argued that the participants in the present study were aware of a socially stratified system of individuals whereby those children perceived as holding higher social status were attributed with more power than those holding less. This extends researchers' understanding about children's definitions of bullying to include the notion of social standing within the peer group as a potential source of asymmetric power. Further, that bullying involves a power imbalance in favour of the bully was evident in some of the case studies, with participants highlighting threatening, coercive, oppressive and dominating behaviours. That participants highlighted such behaviours enhances adults' understanding of definitions of bullying from the child's perspective to encompass its malicious and tyrannical nature.



In respect of children's representations of each of the bully characters in the hypothetical story, participants identified three key roles, that is, leader, assistant and follower/reinforcer, providing evidence of children's understanding of different roles that individuals take in bullying episodes. In the present programme of research, each character in the hypothetical story was ascribed with distinct behavioural tendencies. While these behavioural descriptions seem similar to researcher-generated descriptions of the Bully, Assistant of the Bully and Reinforcer of the Bully roles as itemized in the *Participant Role Scale* (Salmivalli et al., 1996), for example, to the author's knowledge the present programme of research represented a distinctive opportunity for children to discuss participant roles in their own voices. As such, a gender difference was apparent with male and female participants in the present study focusing on different forms of bullying behaviour for each of the three characters not previously documented (a point discussed below). Furthermore, analysis of Freema's case study account drew attention to the notion of a bully/victim role consistent with previous research using quantitative methods, which has identified provocative or aggressive victims, that is, those individuals who display characteristics of both bullies and victims (Boulton & Smith, 1994).

In terms of the leader character, participants' representations focused on behaviours that were clearly pro-active and leader-like. Indeed, participants' allocation of names to the leader bully reflected their perceptions of the principal role of this character in the bullying process (e.g., "ringleader"), a sense of his or her individual control over others (e.g. "master") and the strategic nature of the role (e.g., commander/planner"). Furthermore, male participants focused attention on direct physical bullying such as fighting, physical restraint, stealing others' money or belongings, and hurting others,

and direct verbal bullying, such as blackmail, teasing, threatening, swearing and shouting. On the other hand, female participants highlighted the leader's direct verbal bullying, such as threatening others, picking on individuals who were perceived to be different, swearing and using rude words, watching and laughing, and indirect bullying, such as ignoring others and social exclusion. That male participants drew attention to direct physical and direct verbal behaviours and that female participants focused on direct verbal and indirect behaviours, reflects gender differences in the use of different types of bullying identified by previous research. For example, Björkqvist, Österman and Kaukiainen (1992) found gender differences with regard to engagement in different types of aggression. Whereas, boys displayed more physical aggression than girls did, girls used more indirect means of aggression than did boys. This gender difference is discussed further below.

With regard to the assistant character, participants perceived that he or she played a supportive role in terms of offering assistance and encouragement, and providing support by "tagging along". In terms of specific bullying behaviours perpetrated by the assistant character, male participants highlighted behaviours such as restraining the victim and threatening others, while female participants focused on making fun of the victim. Furthermore, participants described behaviours such as feeling forced to bully others, obeying the leader and taking the blame for the bullying that clearly suggested that this character experienced the leader's behaviour as dominating and oppressive. Such perceptions reflect the dominating and exclusionary behaviours that serve to keep members in the group, identified by Adler and Adler (1995) in their study of preadolescent cliques. Furthermore, that participants in the present study perceived assistants to be submissive and obedient suggests a clear power



imbalance between the leader and their accomplices and fits with the suggestion that the social distance between group members and the desire of the high-status leader to maintain dominance over others results in individuals being treated unequally (Garandeau & Cillessen, 2006). Moreover, observing that the assistant participated in bullying others out of fear of the leader, specifically a fear of being bullied by him or her, clearly indicated that participants perceived that the assistant experienced the leader's behaviour as threatening and intimidating. That assistants were perceived as joining in with bullying through fear of victimization from the bully concurs with previous research with female adolescents, which identified a tendency to join in with bullying others to avoid becoming the next target (Owens et al., 2000b). In representing the assistant character as dominated by and fearful of the leader, participants' responses in the present programme of research extend researchers' knowledge about the nature of the attachments among bullies and what induces assistants to join in, in a primary school-aged sample.

In terms of the follower character, female participants described behaviours that evidently reinforce bullying, such as tagging along, watching, laughing, smiling, smirking and sticking up for the bully. On the other hand, male participants perceived that the follower character experienced the leader's behaviour as the assistant character did, that is, dominating and intimidating through, for example, being forced to take part, obeying the leader and taking the blame. That male participants in the present study perceived the follower's behaviour to be essentially the same as the assistant's perhaps suggests that they are not fully aware of the subtle differences that individuals play in the bullying process. In contrast, by attributing different behavioural tendencies to the assistant and the follower, the results suggest



that female participants had clearly distinguished between the two roles. This might be because female participants identified more with the role of the follower than male participants did. Alternatively, it might be that girls of this age have a more sophisticated understanding of participant roles in the bullying process or group processes generally, than boys.

In addition, male participants perceived that the follower copied the leader. Indeed, Mustafa's case study account highlighted the notion of the short assistant bully as an apprentice "...learning something from the bullies". The perception that followers copy the bully is in keeping with the notion of "social contagion" identified by Olweus (1999a, p. 20). Olweus used the term social contagion to describe the effect of passive bullies (e.g., followers), who do not have a natural status among their peers, modelling their behaviour on that of the bully or bullies in order to assert themselves.

The present findings further revealed that participants perceived that the follower character was not much involved in bullying. That participants in the present study perceived the follower character's involvement to be intermittent and minimal accords with the claim that children will often assert that they "aren't doing anything" (O'Connell et al., 1999, p. 448). In addition, it lends support to the adult notion of a passive bully, that is, a child who participates in bullying others but who does not usually take the initiative (Olweus, 1994). The perception that the reinforcer/ follower/small assistant character was minimally involved might be explained in terms of participants not realizing that by exhibiting behaviours such as laughing and watching followers provide an audience for the bully, which reinforces

the bully's behaviour and signals approval of the bullying (O'Connell et al., 1999; Pepler et al., 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Indeed, previous research suggests that children do not share adult views about what behaviours constitute bullying. For example, in their study of children's definitions of bullying, Guerin and Hennessy (2002) identified six categories of behaviour none of which included actions that might reinforce the bullying by inciting the bully, such as laughing or watching. This discrepancy between children's and adults' definitions about what constitutes bullying highlights the need for adults to be aware of a range of definitions regarding school bullying and the implications this has for the development of school-based interventions (see Section 9.4, p. 430).

That a gender difference was apparent in the behavioural descriptions for each of the bully characters in the hypothetical story provides evidence from the child's perspective that within the social world of males bullying has a different meaning and purpose compared with that of females (Salmivalli, Lappalainen, & Lagerspetz, 1998). For males, it might be a question of power, domination and showing off, whereas for females it might have more to do with social relationships and social situations (Salmivalli et al., 1998). Rogoff (2003) suggests that the differences observed between males and females in social relations that involve bullying and aggression reflect the traditions and practices associated with the gender roles expected of adults in many cultural communities, roles for which children from their earliest years are participating in and preparing to assume. Thus, from a socio-cultural perspective, whereas boys' engagement in direct aggression reflects the expectation that males are aggressive and tough (Askew, 1989), the importance of peer groups and close relationships with others reflects girls' use of relationally



aggressive tactics, such as malicious use of exclusion, gossip and relationship manipulation (Rogoff, 2003). Furthermore, that gender differences were found regarding what constitutes leader, assistant and follower behaviour demonstrates the importance of exploring children's understanding of school bullying from their perspective as these distinctions regarding actual or hypothetical bully character's behaviours are not currently apparent in the literature.

The present findings draw attention to tactics employed by the leader clearly intended to manipulate interpersonal relationships within the peer group, such as deciding who is or is not a member of the group and not allowing the assistant or the follower to befriend the new pupil. These findings concur with previous research on preadolescent cliques that identified similar group processes such as inclusion (e.g., membership screening) and exclusion (e.g., rejection, expulsion) techniques used to influence group membership and social stratification among the group (Adler & Adler, 1995). Furthermore, Annie claimed, "I know once you get into those groups it's really hard to get out of them". This view concurs with previous research that suggests that leaders ensure that members further down the hierarchy remain in the group because they provide support, attention and loyalty that serves to maintain the leaders' dominance, status and social standing (Adler & Adler, 1995; Pepler et al., 1999). That solely females mentioned such inclusion and exclusion tactics concurs with research with adolescent females. This research, which investigated indirect aggression, identified a number of similar behaviours, such as the manipulation of friendship patterns (Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Galen & Underwood, 1997). Owens et al. (2000a) suggested that acceptance by the peer group is of crucial importance to adolescent girls with membership defining who is



“in” and who is “out”. Given the age of the present sample (10- to 11-years-old), it was interesting to note that awareness of the leader’s inclusion and exclusion tactics was evident, suggesting that peer group acceptance is also of great importance among younger girls.

#### *9.2.6.2 Interpersonal relationships and participation in bullying.*

The present results provided important insights into participants’ perceptions regarding the nature of the interpersonal relationships among members of the bully group and their motivation for participation in bullying not previously documented. Generally, participants perceived that connection with the group offered self-protection of some kind for each of the bully characters. For example, male participants perceived that the leader’s attachments were motivated by the safety that having followers and “backup” offered. Similarly, male and female participants perceived that attachment with other children offered the leader protection from the consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour. That participants perceived that the leader’s desire for friendships was motivated by the need for safety and protection from the consequences of bullying others is consistent with the argument that being part of a group helps the aggressor to remain invisible, making it difficult for the victim to either retaliate or report the aggression to an adult (Garandeau & Cillessen, 2006). Thus, it could be argued that participants in the present study perceived that the presence of assistants and followers enabled the leader to engage in bullying others with minimum personal risk in terms of negative consequences, and highlights the nature of the attachments between the leader and other members of the group in terms of self-preservation.

Furthermore, female participants perceived that the leader's attachment with other children was motivated by a desire for friendship and as a means of reducing loneliness. The need for friendships as a motive for connection with others is consistent with the notion that the desire for interpersonal relationships is a basic human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Furthermore, the desire for friendship reflects the notion that girls' close personal relationships with one another are an important factor in their daily lives (Besag, 2006). Thus, it could be argued that the need for friendships attracts girls to bully because affiliation with other peers in the bully group reduces feelings of isolation and loneliness and fulfils the psychological need to belong and feel accepted (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Malley, Beck, & Adorno, 2001). In terms of bullying as a means of reducing loneliness, Malley et al. (2001) argued that the structure of the school system, with its emphasis on compliance, control and orderliness and its preoccupation with results, competition and individual success, have contributed to a social context in which children feel alienated, isolated, and rejected. From this perspective, membership of the bully group and participation in bullying others might be viewed as a response to children's sense of a lack of belonging which has implications for the design of school-based interventions (see Section 9.4, p. 430).

With regard to the assistant and follower, male participants perceived that these character's attachments to the leader were motivated by the need for safety, and protection from others. This finding suggests that participants were aware of the protective function of friendship (Pellegrini et al., 1999), and perhaps perceived that affiliation with the leader might protect the assistant and follower characters from victimization from other aggressive children in the class or school. Conversely, in



taking the role of the follower, both male and female participants cited protection from being victimized by the leader as a motive for affiliation, while solely female participants cited protection from victimization from the assistant's point of view. A tendency to join in with bullying to avoid becoming the next victim has been identified in a study of female adolescents' explanations for indirect aggression (Owens et al., 2000b). Research into bystander behaviour offers further insight. For example, Rigby and Johnson (2005) found that if presented with a real-life bullying situation some pupils predicted that they would ignore the bullying to avoid harm to the self, while a small minority indicated that it would be safer to assist the bully. Thus, participants in the present programme of research described the nature of the interpersonal relationships among members of the group in terms of individual self-interest.

In addition, females perceived that protection from exclusion from the group was a motive for the follower's attachment to the bullies, suggesting an awareness of the dynamic nature of group membership (Adler & Adler, 1995) and the instability of friendship bonds among girls (Besag, 2006). Girls' desire to be a part of the group coincides with the work of Owens et al. (2000a) exploring adolescent females and indirect aggression, which found that being a member of the peer group was of great importance. That female participants aged 10- to 11-years-old in the present study also identified protection from exclusion as a motive for connection with the bullies suggests that peer group membership is similarly important among younger girls. In addition, the case study data highlighted the maintenance of friendships with the bullies and "fitting in" as motives for engaging in bullying, again demonstrating participants' awareness of the importance of friendships and belonging. Previous



research which investigated preadolescent cliques found that group members actively participated in perpetrating negative behaviours towards others because such participation brought with it feelings of inclusion (Adler & Adler, 1995).

Furthermore, research with adolescent females found that participants joined in with bullying to maintain their affiliation with the bully group (Owens et al., 2000b).

Thus, as Owens et al. (2000b) suggest, a self-protection motive might be in operation with girls not choosing to oppose the prevailing group opinion since to do so would risk exclusion from the group. Since evidence suggests that individuals possess a basic desire to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), it could be argued that affiliation with the bully group fulfils this need.

Moreover, male participants cited improved status as a motive for the assistant's attachment to the bully group. Male and female participants cited wanting to be cool as a motive for the follower's attachment, while females cited wanting to be part of the bully group because of the group's perceived popularity. Similarly, research exploring preadolescent cliques has identified popularity and status as motives for group membership (Adler & Adler, 1995; Merten, 1997). Furthermore, research with adolescent females has found that participants reported trying to make friends with the popular group because they aspired to being members of the "right" group (Owens et al., 2000b). It could be argued, as Garandeau and Cillessen (2006) have suggested, that participants in the present study perceived that the assistant and follower characters deemed that the status and popularity that affiliation with the group offered was more important than the integrity and quality of their interpersonal relationships.

In addition, participants in the present programme of research perceived that the bullies gained pleasure from bullying others, a view that is in accord with previous research. For example, Bosacki et al. (2006) found that the majority of children in their study of children's pictorial and narrative representations of bullying experiences depicted the bully as smiling. The perception that the bully characters gain pleasure from bullying others might suggest that participants in the present study perceived that the bullies experienced positive arousal from inflicting harm on others together with a lack of empathy towards their victims. Indeed, Annie attributed arousal of positive feelings (feeling great) to the assistants as a motive for their attachment to the bully group. A motivation to bully others has been associated with excitement and arousal (Pepler et al., 1999), psychological gratification (Smith & Morita, 1999), social status within the peer group (Archer, 2001; O'Connell et al., 1999), and feelings of power (O'Connell et al., 1999). Previous research which investigated preadolescent cliques found that group members actively complied with negative behaviours towards others because such participation brought with it feelings of privilege and power (Adler & Adler, 1995). With this in mind, it could be argued that participants in the present programme of research perceived that, by acting as assistants, peers share in the bully's emotional, psychological and social gains.

#### *9.2.6.3 Justification for engaging in bullying others.*

The present findings revealed original insights regarding children's justification and support for bullying under a number of circumstances. These included provocation from the victim, when the bully was in a position of power and authority, when the bully remained uncaught and unpunished, when the bullying behaviour was



considered minor, when engagement in bullying was minimal, and in terms of rectifying previous unfair treatment. That participants cited provocation from the victim as a justification for the bullies' behaviour concurs with the argument that some victims might behave in ways that cause irritation and tension around them such that their behaviour provokes others, resulting in negative reactions (Olweus, 1997). Nevertheless, blaming the victim for being bullied accords with the practice of moral disengagement that centres on the attribution of blame to the target of negative behaviour, as described by Bandura (2002). He suggests that when victims are blamed for bringing suffering upon themselves, violent conduct becomes a justifiable defensive reaction to provocation. By viewing one's harmful conduct as forced by circumstance, rather than as a personal decision, self-exoneration is also achievable (Bandura, 2002). In the present study, it could be argued that by attributing blame for being bullied to the victim participants perceived that the bullies' actions were excusable.

The perception that bullying is justified when the leader bully is in a position of power and authority is consistent with the notion of an abuse of "position power" (Randall, 1997). According to Randall (1997, p. 35), "...position power...is conferred by reason of, for example, employment status (e.g., a manager has more power than a process worker in the same factory)" and has the potential for bullying to occur when an individual abuses his or her position. In the present programme of research, that bullying is justified when the bully is in a position of power and authority suggests that Alistair has an awareness of an experience of an abuse of position power in the school setting. This finding extends researchers' understanding about the nature of the power differential between the victim and the bully to include



the abuse of position power, which goes beyond the current understanding of physical and mental strength as identified by Olweus (1991).

The notion that bullying is justified when the leader bully remains uncaught and unpunished for previous bullying suggests a greater concern for the consequences to the self for engaging in bullying than for the negative effects to others. This finding is consistent with previous research using hypothetical vignettes (Menesini et al., 2003) and teacher-reported overt aggression (Manning & Bear, 2002), which demonstrated that aggressive males expressed more concern for the imminent consequences of their behaviour, such as punishment, than did their non-aggressive peers. Menesini et al. (2003) argue that such a view demonstrates a moral disengagement mechanism, which reflects a high level of egocentric reasoning and a low level of moral sensibility towards others.

The perception that bullying is justified when it is considered minor may indicate the construction of different degrees and forms of bullying behaviours along a continuum, ranging from low- to high-levels of behaviour and involvement. This suggests that participants perceived that differing levels and types of bullying behaviour were more or less harmful and morally wrong than others, and intimates a lack of consideration for the victim with regard to the consequent negative effects, irrespective of the type or degree of the behaviour. This finding concurs with the notion that socialization and cultural factors influence children's moral judgements of social behaviour (Gilligan, 1993; Rogoff, 2003; Turiel, 1998). To illustrate, it could be that a cultural emphasis on the seriousness of physical aggression may socialize children to adopt differing views of the wrongness and harmfulness of

direct physical bullying as compared with indirect forms of bullying (Murray-Close et al., 2006). Indeed, research suggests that teachers and other adults working in schools are socialized to judge that physical bullying is more severe and more serious than verbal or relational bullying (e.g., Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001).

From the follower's perspective, participants justified taking part in bullying others in terms of this character's minimal involvement. This minimization of the follower's behaviour in the bullying process appears to fit with the notion of moral disengagement in terms of diffusion of responsibility for negative behaviour (Bandura, 2002). According to this view, the division of labour among different members of a group diffuses responsibility for harmful conduct, such that individual acts, which are harmful when considered together, appear harmless in isolation (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Thus, personal responsibility is diffused because any harm perpetrated by a group can be attributed to the behaviour of others. Given that research demonstrates that peers play various participant roles in the bullying process, ranging from providing an audience to becoming actively involved in the bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996), it is possible that a child's sense of individual responsibility for their involvement in bullying is weakened when several other children participate (Olweus, 1999b). Thus, from this perspective any harm caused to the victim is attributed by the follower to the behaviour of the other members of the bully group. In turn, responsibility for taking part in bullying the victim is diffused, thereby leaving the follower feeling less accountable for his or her actions.



In taking the leader's perspective, engaging in bullying others was justified by participants in terms of rectifying previous unfair treatment that the leader had experienced. Whereas male discussions focused on general unfair treatment experienced at home, females focused on unfair treatment in terms of the leader's previous experience of being bullied. Moreover, from the follower's perspective, his or her bullying behaviour was justified in terms of rectifying previous unfair treatment, namely being bullied at home. It might be possible to explain this justification for bullying in terms of displaced aggression (Björkqvist, Österman & Kaukiainen, 1992), or the "kick the dog" syndrome (Marcus-Newhall, Pedersen, Carlson, & Miller, 2000), which is the redirection of a response to a negative event from the primary source to a secondary target (Hoobler & Brass, 2006). In other words, perhaps participants perceived that the leader and the follower, having experienced unfair treatment either at home or at the hands of another bully, were unable to confront the original source and vented their frustrations on less powerful peers. Furthermore, the perception that the leader did not have a good life fits with the notion that bullies tend to experience an authoritarian, punitive and unsupportive parenting style, within a family context of parental conflict (Baldry & Farrington (2000). Negative attitude, lack of warmth, permissiveness, and the use of power-assertive child-rearing methods (e.g., physical punishment, violent emotional outbursts) on the part of the primary caregiver have also been identified as risk factors for bullying (Olweus, 1980; 1997).

Analysis of the participants' accounts of the follower character directed attention to two moral voices, one that reflected how participants perceived the follower would like to behave and one that reflected how he or she was perceived to behave in



actuality. While the results demonstrate the follower's pro-social attitudes, including in one case the desire to befriend the victim, and the awareness of the negative effects of bullying on the victim, they also highlighted participants' perception that the follower feared the personal consequences if he or she did not obey the leader. Thus, while the follower was perceived as unhappy about his or her involvement in the bullying process, participants perceived that the follower was also afraid to stand up for him- or herself. According to participants, the follower character resolved this incongruence between thought and action by justifying his or her participation in bullying as a form of protection against being bullied by the leader. This finding is somewhat in accord with evidence suggesting that, with regard to general attitudes, the majority of children are opposed to bullying and supportive of victims (e.g., Boulton & Underwood, 1992). Despite this, research also demonstrates that the majority of children tend to act in ways that maintain and support bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Sutton & Smith, 1999).

It might be possible to explain why followers justify their part in the bullying process by drawing upon cognitive dissonance principles. According to Festinger's (1957, cited in Hogg & Vaughan, 2005) original theory, cognitive dissonance is generated when two or more cognitions are inconsistent with each other. For example, in the present study, if a follower privately held anti-bullying views, and yet publicly participated in joining in with bullying the victim, he or she might experience dissonance. Festinger proposed that since individuals seek harmony in their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour they will try to reduce the tension created by the inconsistency between the conflicting cognitions. This is achieved by removing dissonant cognitions, by adding consonant cognitions or by reducing the importance

of the dissonant cognitions. In the present study, it is possible that since cognitive dissonance did not motivate the follower to leave the group (Maikovich, 2005) he or she overcame it by reducing the importance of the dissonant cognition by using a moral disengagement mechanism. By participating in bullying others for personal gain, in this case protection from victimization and exclusion from the group, it could be argued that the follower was perceived to minimize the consequences of their negative behaviour toward the victim, which in turn reduced the need for self-censure (Bandura, 1999).

#### *9.2.6.4 Negative effects of bullying on the victim.*

All case study accounts drew attention, to varying degrees, to the negative emotional effects of bullying on the victim's health and well-being (e.g., anger, fear, worry, shame, sadness, unhappiness). In addition, Annie, Mustafa, Karin and Henry's accounts highlighted the negative psychological effects (e.g., lowered self-esteem, sleeping difficulties, crying, hopelessness, loneliness), and Karin and Alistair's accounts called attention to negative physical effects (e.g., bodily harm). This finding suggests that, when taking the perspective of the victim, children of this age are well aware of the potential harm that arises from different forms of bullying as depicted in the hypothetical story. This concurs with previous research that suggested that over half of primary school pupils defined bullying as behaviour that has a negative effect in terms of being "hurtful and upsetting" (Gueurin & Hennessy, 2002). Furthermore, all but Freema's account highlighted the victim's sense of disconnection and detachment from peers either in terms of feeling excluded (e.g., feeling alone, feeling like an outsider or a misfit, having no-one to talk to, not having any friends) or in terms of the victim socially isolating him- or herself as a form of



self-protection from the bullies. That participants cited feelings of exclusion supports previous research which found that exclusion (not talking to someone, excluding from games or groups) was identified as a bullying behaviour by nearly 13% of primary school children (Gueurin & Hennessy, 2002).

### *9.3 Methodological Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

Studies 1 and 2 were not without their limitations. The first of these regards issues pertaining to the recruitment of participants in the school setting. The second limitation relates to matters of data collection methods, while the third pertains to questions of data analysis. The following section discusses each of these methodological limitations in turn.

#### *9.3.1 Gaining Children's Active Consent and Voluntary Participation*

As outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1 (p. 69), given the issues regarding access to and recruitment of children to participate in research, I adopted a number of procedures and practices to facilitate their voluntary participation. These included involving the Year 6 class teachers at an early stage in the process, employing child friendly information materials and presenting an introduction session. In terms of class teacher involvement and the location of the introduction session, however, these strategies were problematic. Drawing on my experiences with Cedar School in the Exploratory Study (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4.1, p. 140) I attempted to involve the class teachers at an early stage of the access and recruitment process by arranging meetings with each of them to introduce the research and myself, and to discuss any issues they might have. However, one class teacher missed the appointment. Furthermore, in an attempt to reduce the potential for children to perceive the



introduction sessions and the subsequent research as part of the formal curriculum, I arranged with each of the schools to present the introduction sessions in rooms other than the children's usual classrooms, for example, the school hall. In one school the introduction session was conducted in the school's performance room with the children, their class teacher and I all sitting on the floor in a circle. In the other school, however, as both the conference room and the school hall were unavailable, it was conducted in the classroom with the children sitting on the carpeted area and me sitting in the class teacher's chair, with the teacher attending at the back of the room.

One of the primary limitations of conducting an introduction session in children's classrooms was that such a context might have influenced their decision to participate, as there are certain expectations inherent within such a context (Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992). For example, the children may have felt obliged to consent to participate simply as a result of the set-up of the introduction session for a number of reasons. In the first instance, as I occupied the teacher's chair at the front of the classroom the children may have perceived me much the same as a teacher, making it difficult for them to opt out of participation. Similarly, the simple act of receiving the introduction session within the classroom context may have engendered certain expectations whereby potential participants may have perceived the research to be compulsory (Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992). Finally, there is the possibility that as an alternative to participating in the research was not offered (Morrow & Richards, 1996) and the research was scheduled to be conducted during lesson time, the children consented to participate to avoid doing usual class work (Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992; Heath, Charles, Crow & Wiles, 2007). Future researchers might

consider arranging a meeting in the school hall during lunchtime for interested volunteers, advertised through leaflets and posters, for example, to facilitate voluntary attendance at the introduction session.

In an effort to overcome the contextual pressures to participate, I adopted the use of Consent Forms with 'tick boxes' for the children to indicate whether or not they wished to participate, which were returned confidentially in a post box at the end of the introduction session. However, as pointed out in Chapter 4 (see Section 4.4.1, p. 140), as part of the process of giving children information about the research, and as a basis for recruiting participants and gaining their informed consent, the children, by completing the Consent Form had unknowingly provided me with data (David et al., 2001). Thus, despite my efforts to provide an arena for opting in or opting out of the research, by means of giving children sufficient and appropriate information for consent or dissent to be freely given, potential participants were already participating in a research activity without having given their consent (David et al., 2001). With hindsight, my efforts at ensuring informed consent, which encompassed a Consent Form designed to ascertain whether children had understood the Participant Information Letter, may have been inappropriate. In addition, the practice may have led children to perceive me in the role of adult expert handing out what were, effectively, questionnaires. Future research might consider developing alternative methods of communicating information about research to prospective participants to ensure sufficient understanding, such as talking with children in small groups, providing tape-recorded explanations of the study, or supplying information packs about the research with activity sheets (Emond, 2005; Hill, 2005; O'Kane, 2000). Ideally, these would be designed and developed in collaboration with children.



I would argue that in attempting to work towards achieving freely given informed consent and voluntary participation from the children, my requests for meetings with teachers and use of public spaces for the presentation of the introduction session placed extra demands upon the school's routines and resources, and intruded into the teacher's working context (Rassool, 2004). From a socio-cultural perspective, it is possible that my desire to facilitate children's voluntary consent to participation conflicted with the everyday cultural practices, traditions and routines of their schools, a culture in which adults were not used to pupils being perceived as social actors with the opportunity to make decisions for themselves (Rogoff, 2003). Thus, despite the head teacher's informed consent to participate on behalf of the school and the staff, I should not have assumed that all members of the school staff would possess the same views about participating in my programme of research. A resistance on the part of school staff reduces the opportunities for researchers to adopt child friendly procedures and practices, with the employment of such protocols dependent upon the circumstances in which the researcher finds him- or herself and the diversity of adults that he or she encounters (Davis, 1998).

Associated with the issue of active and voluntary participation was the treatment of informed consent as an ongoing process, negotiated over time rather than as a one-off event. For example, for Studies 1 and 2 consent to participate was sought at the introduction session for the one-to-one interviews and then again prior to the focus group discussions. In addition, prior to commencement of the interviews, one or two weeks after the introduction session, I checked that participants wished to continue to take part in the research. However, there were a number of practical limitations with this process. First, some children who granted their informed consent to participate



in the one-to-one interviews at the introduction session, were absent on the day of data collection scheduled one or two weeks later. This may have been for stated reasons, such as illness, peripatetic music lessons or visits to secondary schools. Alternatively, absence from the interviews may have represented a form of passive withdrawal. The ethical dilemma for the researcher was whether absent participants, having granted their informed consent, should be offered a second opportunity to take part in the interview (Hill, 2005). Second, in respect of the focus group discussions, although informed consent was sought immediately prior to data collection, representing an attempt at ongoing consent, my assumption that the information about the research would be remembered by participants was probably unrealistic given it had been imparted through the introduction session and information leaflet presented the previous term. Future research might consider re-distributing the participant information materials at each stage of the data collection to ensure maximum retention of information regarding the research.

Linked to the issue of ongoing informed consent was the provision for participants' right to withdraw from the research at any stage of the process without having to give a reason. While participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage, both at the introduction sessions and in the participant information materials, with further reminders prior to data collection, the option to withdraw in practice was problematic for a number of reasons. First, given the programme of research was conducted during school time (Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992), within a context in which co-operation is usually obligatory and teachers are keen to ensure 100 per cent participation (Alderson & Morrow, 2004), as was exemplified in the Exploratory Study during the informed consent process (see

Chapter 4), participants may have felt powerless to withdraw. Second, given the power differential that exists between adults and children, particularly teachers and pupils in the school context (Christensen & James, 2000), participants may have feared that withdrawal from the research, which was endorsed by senior management in the school and parents/carers, would result in negative consequences (Alderson & Morrow, 2004). Third, practical limitations such as the lack of alternative provision for those participants who wished to withdraw from the research (e.g., substitute activities or the option to move to another room), may have compromised children's capacity to withdraw (France, 2004). While acknowledging that there are financial and human resources implications, future research might consider offering alternative provision to the research activities, thus facilitating children's right to withdraw without having to give a reason.

These challenges to gaining children's active consent and voluntary participation illustrate the dilemma of working with a host society, in this case the school, wherein children are assigned a position of relative powerlessness in relation to adults (Heath et al., 2007). In the present programme of research, the apparent subordinate position of pupils within the school setting contrasted with my image of the child in research, as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2 (p. 62), that is, as an autonomous and competent social actor with the right to choose and take action independently of parents and other adults (Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000). My approach to research with children in the school setting from this perspective was problematic for two reasons. In the first instance, it highlighted the tension between working as a researcher from within an ethical framework that encompassed the rights of the child and the practice of research with children in the school setting wherein pupils were perceived as less



competent and ascribed with less status in relation to adults (Heath et al., 2007). Linked to this is the notion that primary school children have little experience of participating in social research. From the social child perspective, an individual's participation in research could be considered as a constructive activity in which the participant is connecting prior cultural knowledge and understanding about engagement in research with the information that he or she is encountering in the research process (Rogoff, 2003). A lack of exercising his or her research rights, therefore, might be understood in terms of a child's lack of experience of participation in research.

### *9.3.2 Structured Research Activities*

It should first be noted that participants expressed enthusiasm for the structured research activities and were eager to participate in data collection. This was expressed in a number of ways. First, following the one-to-one interviews conducted in the autumn term, participants were disappointed that I would not be returning to school until the spring term. Similarly, after the focus group discussions carried out in the spring term, participants were eager to participate in the activity session in the summer term. Second, after taking part in data collection children expressed their enthusiasm for the research to their class teachers. Third, while I was in school, children would greet me in the corridor or the dining hall, for example, seeking to know when it was their turn to participate in data collection.

Furthermore, the pictorial vignettes employed in the one-to-one interviews and the focus group discussions demonstrated a number of advantages. For example, the rich and illuminating data gathered in Studies 1 and 2 clearly demonstrates that



children identified with the drawings and were able to relate to the characters in the hypothetical story (Owens et al., 200b). In addition, the safety of the narrative task enabled some participants to disclose their personal experiences of being bullied and of bullying others in primary school, a potentially sensitive subject (James et al., 1998). However, there were a number of limitations with the use of pictorial vignettes as a means of facilitating one-to-one interviews. In the first instance, participants' responses to the interview questions were about how they believed they would feel or act in a hypothetical bullying situation and, as such, may not accurately reflect how they would behave in actuality (Barter & Renold, 2000; Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000). For example, research regarding coping strategies suggests that there is a discrepancy between what participants claim they would do if they were involved in a hypothetical bullying situation and what victims actually do in a real-life bullying situation (Ólafsson & Jóhannsdóttir, 2004). In Study 1, therefore, participants' responses can only be considered as representative of how they might behave or feel in an actual bullying situation. Future research might consider using a self-rating procedure to identify participants' roles in the peer group, in order to explore considered coping strategies in relation to their involvement in bullying others, or being bullied (or both).

Associated with the issue of pictorial vignettes versus real-life bullying experiences, was the portrayal of bullying behaviours and bullying scenarios in the hypothetical story. It will be remembered that the pictorial vignettes used in the present programme of research depicted a range of types of bullying behaviours including direct physical, direct verbal and indirect verbal bullying behaviours (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4.2, p. 171), with same gender versions of the story presented to

participants. Nevertheless, the content of the pictorial vignettes was problematic for a number of reasons. First, while a masculine and a feminine version of the hypothetical story were used, by intention and design, the pictorial vignettes did not provide for the notion of mixed gender bullying identified in the literature. For example, Whitney and Smith (1993) found that whereas girls rarely bullied boys, girls experienced bullying from both boys and girls. Therefore, future research may want to take into account scenarios depicting mixed gender bullying. In addition, the types of bullying behaviours portrayed in the pictorial vignettes did not allow for new forms of bullying, for example cyberbullying, “a form of covert psychological bullying conveyed through electronic media such as mobile phones, weblogs and websites, or online chatrooms” (Cowie & Jennifer, in press, p. 1).

In addition, the employment of a semi-structured interview schedule is worthy of comment. While the use of a semi-structured interview enables the modification, omission or addition of questions according to what the interviewer considers appropriate in a given interview situation, such an approach entails the relative control of the researcher over the whole process (Robson, 2002). On reflection, it could be argued that one of the primary limitations of employing a semi-structured interview schedule was that the researcher-participant interaction might have been influenced by the school context in terms of the adult-child discourse patterns established in the classroom (Robinson & Kellet, 2004). For example, school children are used to teachers and other adults initiating a discussion or conversation, often with a question, in which they are expected to provide a response, followed by feedback from the adult (Westcott & Littleton, 2005). Thus, when interacting with an adult researcher in the school context, participants in the present study may have



had an expectation of how to respond to an interview situation based on their prior experience in the classroom. Future research might consider employing a less structured interview format to facilitate a shared and co-constructed process, through which children could create their accounts regarding school bullying actively and meaningfully (Westcott & Littleton, 2005). Actively involving children in the design and implementation of such research as co- or peer researchers might help to remove such contextual expectations.

In terms of employing focus group discussions combined with structured research activities, Study 2 highlighted the tension between the desire to facilitate children's participation without contributing to the power inequalities between researcher and participant, facilitate their ability to communicate effectively and enjoy being involved, facilitate the activities, while at the same time manage challenging behaviour without disciplining the perpetrators. For example, in one male focus group discussion boys were more engaged in behaviours such as falling off chairs, rolling around on the floor and rummaging through my briefcase than they were in the structured research activities. Furthermore, many of the focus group discussions were characterized by all of the children talking at once, children fiddling with the tape-recorder and the materials, and low-level bickering among participants. These behaviours represented a challenge to my image of the participant in research from the social child perspective as I did not want to take on the role of a teacher and discipline the participants and yet, at times, this kind of acting out that goes on amongst school children made the groups seem unmanageable (Kitzinger, 1994). Future research might consider employing a second researcher to assist with the facilitation of the structured research activities, although this practice has human and



financial cost implications. Alternatively, it is possible that some children's engagement in acting out behaviour was linked to motivational issues, which may have represented a form of withdrawing consent (Veale, 2005). On the other hand, it may have been that some children did not find the style of data collection stimulating or interesting. The challenge in research with children, according to Punch (2000b) is to find a happy medium between "not patronising young people and recognising their competencies but maintaining their interest and keeping the research familiar and relevant to them".

Linked to the issue of acting out was participants' hierarchical view of research relations despite my efforts to reduce the power differentials between myself as adult researcher and child participants. For example, participants called me "Miss", used permission-seeking dialogue, for example, to leave the room, engaged in dialogue that placed me in the role of expert ("Does every school have a bully?") and perceived the focus group discussions to be like a lesson ("We're learning about bullies", "Are these lessons going to help us stick up for ourselves?"). It has been suggested that this view of research relations as hierarchical highlights the power differential between adult researcher and child participant (Christensen & James, 2000). This power differential reflects the status imbalance that already exists between teachers and pupils in the school context, and serves to position the researcher in the role of expert, teacher and disciplinarian, which conflicted with my desire to approach participants as active citizens with status and social competencies comparable with those of adults (James, 1999). With hindsight, I would argue that my appearance and self-presentation played a part in sustaining a power imbalance. While I wanted to

establish myself as a professional and credible researcher, rather than as a student, with adults in the school, by wearing formal work clothes, I was aware that such a dress code might have played a significant part in the children perceiving me as a teacher figure (Harden et al., 2000). On reflection, it would have been more appropriate to wear formal work clothes for the initial meetings with the adults in the school and more casual attire for conducting the interviews and focus groups with the children. This would have represented a further attempt to address the power differentials between the participants and me, thus supporting their participation as competent and active individuals.

### *9.3.3 Data Analysis*

As outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.5 (p. 88), in an attempt to ensure that the voices of participants were heard and retained in the data analysis phase of the research process, I adopted a qualitative approach to data analysis, employing a qualitative content analysis and the voice-centred relational method. In terms of using a qualitative content analysis for Study 1, the results concurred with, and enhanced, previous findings regarding general emotional and moral attributions to characters in a hypothetical bullying scenario, and participants' considered use of coping and emotional release strategies to address bullying. Additionally, in examining the reasons behind participants' emotional and moral attributions, the analysis revealed a rich and in-depth understanding peer relationships and involvement in school bullying. For example, the analysis demonstrated participants' understanding of the ambiguous role of the follower in the bullying process. Such findings clearly demonstrate the importance of listening to children's perspectives. In consideration of participants' understanding of school bullying within the context of peer



relationships, further analysis focused attention on a select number of interviews using the voice-centred relational method in order to capture in more detail the complexity of what participants were telling me. Reflexivity guarded against potential over-analysis of the data since it achieved “detachment, internal dialogue and constant (and intensive) scrutiny” (p. vii, Hertz, 1997, cited in Davis, Watson, & Cunningham-Burley, 2000) of the process which was essential for prioritizing the key findings (Punch, 2004).

The results of this analysis both complement and extend current knowledge regarding children’s understanding of the role of the social group context in which school bullying takes place, in particular their understanding of bullying as a group process, the nature of peer relationships, and how and why individuals become involved in bullying others. Furthermore, the case study accounts vividly illustrated that children do not face or resolve school bullying in a vacuum. Rather, the ways in which participants understood and constructed school bullying and their considered means of facing and addressing conflict in their interpersonal relationships were considered from within a context of ongoing and negotiated peer relationships. These findings clearly demonstrate the need to consider school bullying within the social group context of interpersonal relationships and from children’s own perspectives. Specifically, future research could focus on the formation, development and maintenance of groups of bullies. In addition, in order to better understand the formation of interpersonal relationships and peer processes within the bully group, future research needs to consider conflict among leaders, assistants and followers as bullying.



Nevertheless, concerns have been raised about research with children in terms of the validity, reliability and generalizability of the data collected (Dockett & Perry, 2007). It was not my intention to seek out one accurate interpretation of the data, which would generalize across populations, rather my goal was to understand and represent primary school children's experiences and constructions of school bullying from their perspectives (Elliott et al., 1999). In an attempt to increase the validity of the present findings, I adopted a number of practices. First, I used multiple sources to enhance the rigour of the research, that is, I collected data using both interviews and focus group discussions combined with structured research activities (Robson, 2002). It has been argued, that by employing a variety of research techniques that allow children to feel a part of the process researchers can increase the value of their findings in terms of validity and reliability (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Second, in order to keep the participants' voices and perspectives alive, while at the same time recognizing my role in shaping the research process and the final product, I employed a reflexive approach to data analysis (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). Throughout the programme of research, I maintained a research journal in which I documented the decisions and choices that I made regarding data analysis, in order that I might follow the steps by which I came to my interpretations (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). In an attempt to promote reliability, I maintained an audit trail. In other words, I kept a full record of my research activities while carrying out the programme of research, which included raw data (e.g., field notes, audio tape-recordings, transcripts), my research journal, and details of the data coding and analysis (Robson, 2002).

However, while I adopted such procedures, on reflection, it could be argued that the validity, reliability and generalizability of the data collected would have been enhanced had the design of the research included the opportunity for the judgment of the credibility and fittingness of the studies (Sandelowski, 1986). Research is credible when participants involved in a study recognize the researcher's representations of their understanding as their own. In the present programme of research, this could have been achieved by providing a summary of the written results to a sub-sample of the participants for their feedback and clarification to ascertain whether the children involved recognized my representations of their understanding of bullying in primary school as their own (Owens et al., 2000a). Fittingness is achieved when the findings "fit" into contexts outside the original research situation. In other words, fittingness in the present programme of research could have been realized by including opportunities for children from different primary schools to provide feedback and follow-up interviews to check their agreement with the studies' representations of school bullying as "fitting" with their own experiences (Owens et al., 2000a). Not only would these strategies enhance the rigour of the research in terms of validity and reliability, the introduction of such elements to the design of the research would help to minimize the power imbalance between adult researcher and child participant (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998).

#### *9.4 Implications for School-based Interventions*

The findings regarding children's understanding of others' emotions and the role of the social context in which school bullying takes place emphasize the need for school intervention programmes that focus on fostering emotionally healthy interpersonal



relationships that include components such as understanding moral values, understanding emotional states and strategies for building empathy. It seems apparent that interventions that increase children's knowledge and awareness about when and why bullying behaviours are wrong, and the consequences of such actions on others, may lead to the reduction and prevention of school bullying. In particular, interventions that build upon the potential that ambivalent involvement offers to help empower individuals (e.g., followers) to intervene and/or provide support during bullying episodes (Hazler, 1996).

There are a number of strategies that might be employed to address the issue of school bullying that focus on moral values, emotional issues and empathy building, including emotional literacy, restorative justice approaches and peer support (Cowie & Jennifer, in press). Emotional literacy takes an approach that develops emotional and social competency skills, such as the ability to understand, express and manage one's own emotional states, the ability to understand and respond to the emotional states of others in a socially competent fashion, and the ability to understand social situations and form interpersonal relationships (Weare, 2004). For example, the *Second Step* programme (Committee for Children, 2002), uses a class-based approach that consists of curriculum materials, a Family Guide, and learning materials and training for educators that cover the teaching of empathy, impulse control, problem solving and anger management skills (Grossman et al., 1997).

Besides reducing bullying and aggressive behaviour in schools, in addition emotional literacy approaches enhance learning and well-being in the school community, foster open communication among all members of the organization, enable children and



staff to find their own solutions to problems, and encourage staff and pupils to reflect on their relationships with each other (Cowie & Jennifer, in press).

The aim of a restorative justice approach to interpersonal conflicts, such as school bullying, is to transform the power imbalances that affect social relationships (Morrison, 2006). This is achieved by strengthening systems of support and accountability within the school community, promoting healthy shame management procedures, and empowering those affected by harmful behaviour to take responsibility and address the harm they have experienced. Often using peer mediation or peer conferencing strategies, restorative justice draws upon a collaborative approach that involves all affected parties in the process to establish what happened, to facilitate the reparation of any harm done, to encourage the restoration of relationships and to support the reintegration of individuals back into the school community (Cowie & Jennifer, in press). Not only does research suggest that restorative justice is an effective intervention against school bullying and other harmful behaviour, this approach has the capacity to empower individuals and communities through building healthy and supportive relationships, and fostering democratic organizations (Morrison, 2006).

Peer support initiatives build on the resources that friends spontaneously offer one another, helping school communities to foster a safe and caring learning environment (Cowie & Wallace, 2000). This approach facilitates the use of basic listening skills, the development of empathy for the other's point of view, a problem solving style of dealing with interpersonal difficulties and a willingness to take a supportive role in dealing with peer relationship issues, such as providing support for victims of

bullying. Peer support initiatives provide children with the opportunity to discuss matters of personal concern, including friendship problems and bullying, to develop a sense of belongingness and to promote experiences that enhance a positive and respectful ethos within the school. In addition to benefiting the users, a peer support service also benefits the peer supporters and the school community as a whole (Cowie & Wallace, 2000).

The present findings also highlight the need to listen to children's perspectives regarding school bullying. For example, the results presented here suggest that primary school children's perceptions of what constitutes bullying, such as the degree of behaviour and the level of involvement, differ from those of adults. Children's differing perceptions will have practical implications for the effective design and implementation of interventions to address school bullying, unless their experiences and views are taken into account. For example, the effectiveness of interventions to address school bullying will be dependent upon the extent to which the behaviours that children and teachers consider need to be addressed concur (Guerin & Hennessy, 2002). That the definition of bullying may differ between individuals, contexts and communities needs to be taken into account in the design and implementation of anti-bullying measures. Prior to the design and implementation of an intervention, if it has any chance of success, opportunities need to be given to children and staff to develop their own definition of school bullying and which demonstrate that a range of perspectives are equally valid without any one definition necessarily being "right or wrong. Through the process of discussion and recognition of a multiplicity of definitions, individual awareness and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of school bullying will be achieved.



In addition, children who are not aware that their behaviour constitutes bullying, for example, the followers, may fail to benefit from interventions that address such behaviour. In the first instance, therefore, an important practical implication of these findings for addressing school bullying is that interventions may benefit from preliminary work directed towards general awareness raising and self-reflection (Salmivalli, 1999). Raising awareness might involve facilitating children's understanding of bullying behaviour and its consequences, and of the group processes involved, while self-reflection could involve engaging children in discussions using, for example, a film stimulus such as *Bully Dance* (Perlman, 2000) to facilitate reflection upon their attitudes, feelings and behaviours with regard to school bullying.

### 9.5 Conclusion

A major aim of the present programme of research was to engage children meaningfully as active participants in the research process in order to explore their understanding of bullying in primary school in their own voices. The findings relating to children's emotional attributions and moral reasoning in relation to followers and their understanding of the role of the social group context in which bullying takes place are probably the most interesting. With regard to emotional attributions and moral reasoning in respect of the follower, the results indicated that, as with the victim, negative emotions (i.e., worry and shame) were attributed. In consideration of the role of the social group context in which school bullying takes place, the results indicated children's complex understanding of school bullying in terms of the nature of interpersonal relationships and peer processes. Specifically, the analyses revealed children's understanding of the hierarchical structure of the



bully group, which they perceived involved a system of dominance whereby the high-status leader exerted control over other children and their behaviour. The results demonstrated children have an involved understanding of the nature of attachments among members of the group and their motivations and justifications for engaging in bullying others. In particular, these findings demonstrated children's perception that the follower character was ambivalent about his or her part in bullying others, justifying his or her participation as a form of self-protection from bullying by the leader.

Taken together these results contribute to an understanding of school bullying from a socio-cultural perspective. From this viewpoint, school bullying can be explained in terms of the dissimilarities in social and cultural norms of different social groups, such as those defined by gender, ethnicity and race, or social class (Rigby, 2003b), which can affect the ways in which children learn to behave with one another. The implications for best practice from this perspective are for schools to replace an academic structure that emphasizes competition over cooperation, with opportunities for children to learn wider aspects of relating to others, such as empathy building, emotional literacy, pro-social skills and effective communication, and an appreciation of diversity.

The secondary aim of the current programme of research was to explore the employment of child friendly protocols with primary school children that would support children's voluntary and active participation in the study of school bullying. In summary, in my attempt to employ child friendly practices and procedures to facilitate children's voluntary and active participation, this programme of research

highlighted a tension between the culture of the school and my desire to work from within an ethical framework that sought to engage children as social actors, that is, as autonomous and competent individuals. The contextual conditions imposed upon me by researching children in the school setting meant that, in practice, child friendly protocols were sometimes problematic to manage. To illustrate, the results highlighted some possible limitations with regard to gaining children's active consent and voluntary participation in terms of contextual pressures to participate. Although I desired to work with children as competent and social actors, with the right to choose and take action independently of teachers and other adults, their apparent subordinate position within the school setting proved challenging in gaining their active consent to opt-in to the research.

Nevertheless, to some degree, the employment of techniques to gain children's active consent and voluntary participation, together with the application of a variety of data collection methods and the use of qualitative data analysis methods reduced the power imbalance between myself as adult and children participants. Furthermore, it demonstrated my commitment as a researcher to adopt methods that would respect children's rights to participation and enable me to listen to and hear their accounts. Employing child friendly methods provided a great deal of interesting information both within the context of the present programme of research and within the wider context of research with children, allowing scope for future researchers to replicate and further explore these protocols.

In conclusion, despite some methodological limitations to the present programme of research, the findings generally concur with and enhance previous research. In

addition, a number of the findings are novel and these results in particular provide numerous opportunities for future researchers to explore further children's understanding of bullying in primary school. The findings also have important implications for school-based interventions to address bullying. It may be prudent for interventions to focus on fostering emotionally healthy interpersonal relationships that include components such as understanding moral values, understanding emotional states and strategies for building empathy. Furthermore, it is apparent that researchers and practitioners need to take into account the perspectives of the children themselves if anti-bullying work is to be effective.



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## APPENDIX A

### *Participant Information Letter Exploratory Study*

11 June 2003

Dear Young Person

My name is Dawn Jennifer and I'm a researcher at Roehampton University of Surrey. Your school has agreed to work with me on a project to look into the ways we can encourage young people to be non-violent and to help produce publicity materials for handing out to other young people who will take part in the research next year.

The research consists of this Circle Time session when you will have the chance to interview me about the project, and two focus groups over the next couple of weeks each lasting about one hour. In groups of five or six I will ask you about what you think can be done to stop violence that can hurt your body or your feelings. I will also ask you for your advice about what kind of information young people like yourself need in order to agree to take part in research. During the focus groups we will be doing activities, such as, games, brainstorming, discussion, and drawings.

The interview and focus groups will be tape-recorded to help with the research. All information I collect will be kept completely confidential. It will not be possible for anyone to know what you have said. I will make sure that you understand what the research is about by giving you the chance to ask any questions.

A report of the results will be given to the school in September/October 2005 and I hope that this will help the school to develop its policy in this area and support learning for all young people.

I would be most grateful if you would agree to take part in this research. If you do decide to take part, you are free to stop and back out any time without having to give a reason.

Please note: if taking part in this research raises anything that you would like to discuss with anyone else, you might like to approach:

- ♥ Your Class Teacher
- ♥ ChildLine 0800 1111
- ♥ [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)
- ♥ [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

***THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH***

## APPENDIX B

### *Participant Consent Form Exploratory Study*



CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Programme:** The promotion of non-violence in schools

**Researcher:** Dawn Jennifer

Have you read the Participant Information?	Yes	No
Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the research?	Yes	No
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	Yes	No
Have you received enough information about the research?	Yes	No
Do you understand that participation in the research is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw from the research at any time without having to give a reason?	Yes	No
Do you understand that anything you say will be treated confidentially and reported in such a way that does not identify you?	Yes	No
Do you agree to take part in this research?	Yes	No

**Name:** .....

**Signature:**.....

**Date:**.....

## APPENDIX C

*Example of a Checkpoint Worksheet (Varnava, 2002)*

**Checkpoint 1**  
**Home, School and Community –**  
**In school and out**

1.	I am involved in making the rules on behaviour.	Yes	No
2.	The rules apply to everyone at school, including visitors.	Yes	No
3.	I know what happens when rules are broken.	Yes	No
4.	The Home/School Contract deals with non-violence and suggests how violence can be avoided both in school and out.	Yes	No
5.	We work with people from the local community in finding ways to prevent violence.	Yes	No



APPENDIX D

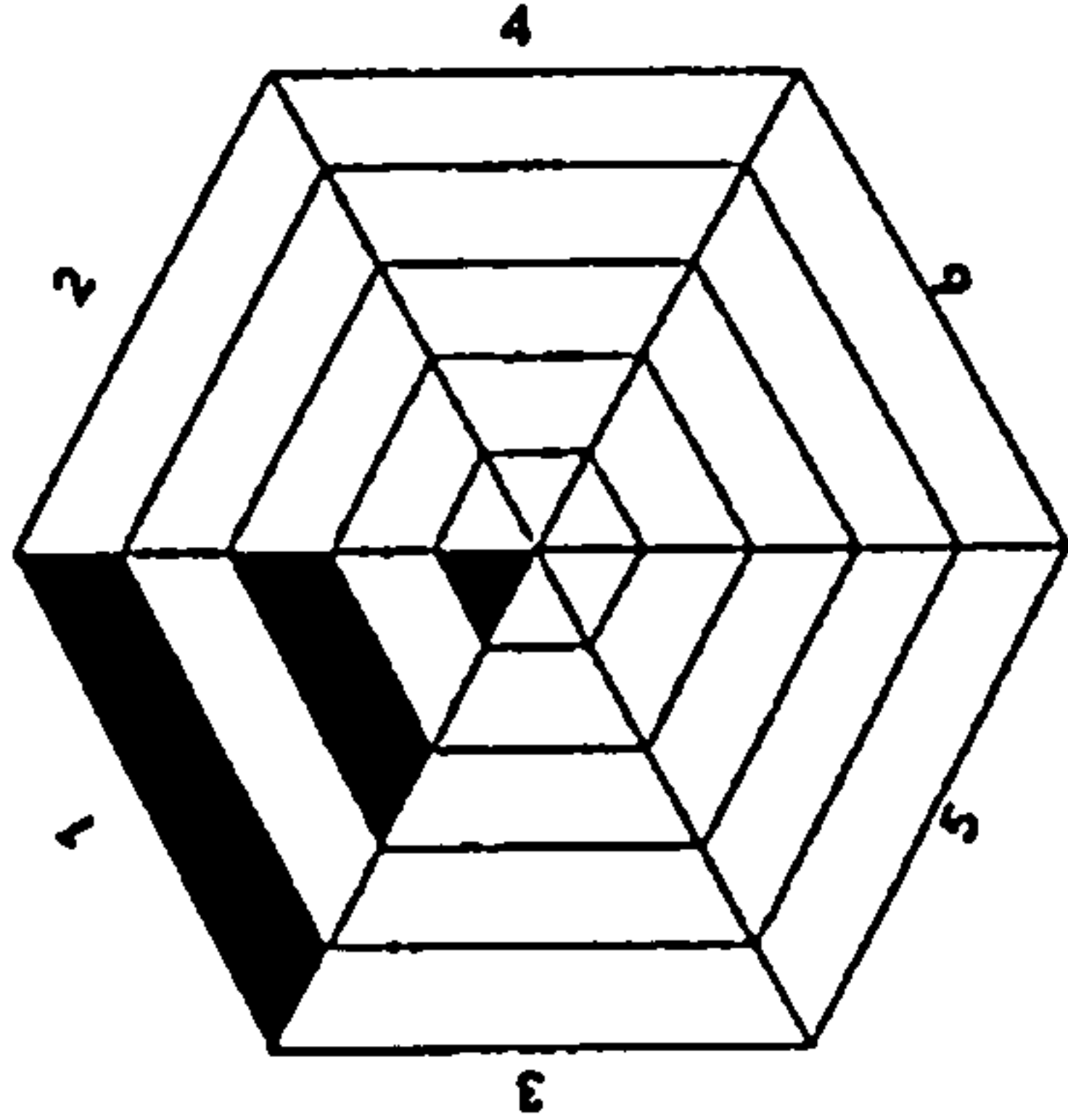
*Web Diagram (Varnava, 2002)*

### The Checkpoints web

The web represents six aspects or Checkpoints of the school:

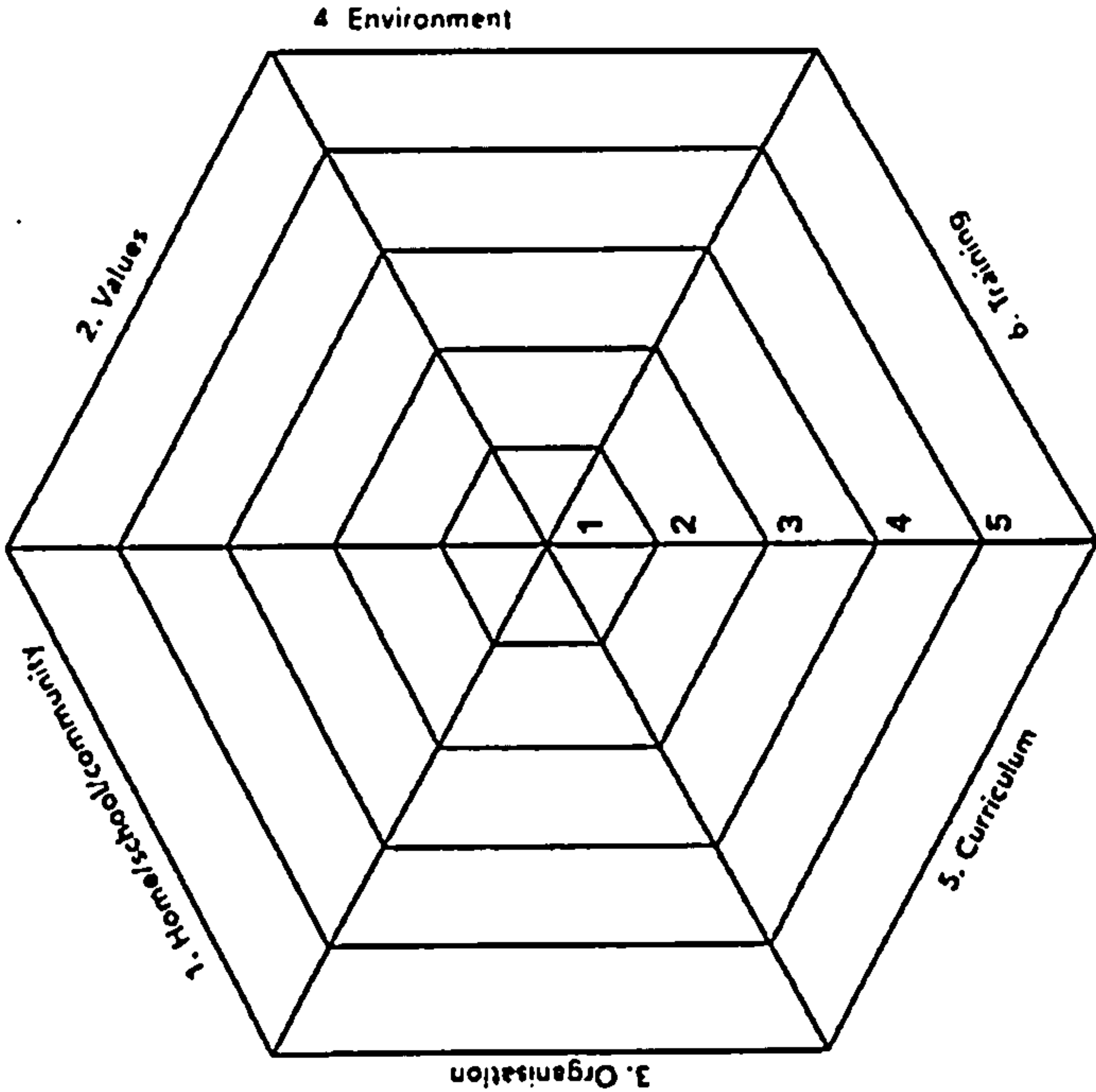
- 1. Home/school/community
- 2. Values
- 3. Organisation
- 4. Environment
- 5. Curriculum
- 6. Training

Once the Checkpoint statements have been read and ticked for either: yes or no, transfer the results to the web shading in the yes answers. For example:



The web illustrates the stage reached by the school in addressing violence, and highlights where further action needs to be taken.

Shading key



APPENDIX E

*Sample Pages from ChildLine Booklet (n.d., a)*



**You can sort out some problems by yourself.**

**Or you can talk to your parents, carers, teachers or other adults you trust, or your friends.**



**But sometimes problems are too big to handle on your own. Or people won't listen. Sometimes it's just too hard to talk to someone you know.**

**So it can help to call ChildLine and talk to someone you don't know, who will really listen.**



APPENDIX F

*Sample Pages from Checkpoints for Young People (Varnava, 2002)*

Name:

School:

Class/Form:

Teacher/Tutor:

**Introduction**  
To young people moving from primary to secondary school: this Checkpoints is for you. It is a guide based on the successful use of Checkpoints for Schools and the many suggestions made by young people of your age. Checkpoints is aimed at helping to prevent violent behaviour which involves young people.

**Some facts**  
Violence hurts. It can hurt your body and your feelings. People do not have to be violent. They learn to be violent, usually as a child.

- Up to 60 per cent of young people are bullied at some point in time
- Most children at home are smacked
- In 90 per cent of cases when there is violence between adults at home, children see or hear it.

Checkpoints can help to draw everyone's attention to the problems of violent behaviour. It suggests what can be done to prevent violence. It can be used in various ways at home or at school.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child gives you 'the right to express the views you have and for your views to be listened to in anything that affects you'.

**Using Checkpoints**  
You can use Checkpoints by yourself, with other people or through the School Council. If you don't know an answer, ask someone at school or at home to help you find out. Read each item and tick either 'yes' or 'no'. Then, using the web on page 12, starting at the middle, shade in each section where you have answered 'yes'.

You will then have a diagram which shows how far action has already been taken to prevent violence and shows which areas still require action. You can also add your own suggestions in Checkpoint 7.

To get the best out of Checkpoints it is helpful for you to make your own statement about what you hope to achieve. For example: 'I aim to be part of a violence-free community'.

My statement:



APPENDIX G

*School Introductory Letter*

7 February 2003

[Head Teacher]  
 [School Name]  
 [Address 1]  
 [Address 2]  
 [City]  
 [Post Code]

Dear [Head Teacher]

I am writing to introduce myself: my name is Dawn Jennifer and I am a Research Student at Roehampton University of Surrey. I have recently been awarded a School of Psychology and Therapeutic Studies Bursary to undertake a doctorate on the subject of the promotion of non-violence in schools. I am, therefore, writing to enquire whether [School Name] might be interested in participating in this programme of research.

The research programme provides pupils with the opportunity to explore a range of topics including: their perspectives of psychological and physical violence at school, their solutions for how it can be addressed, their views on the roles played by adults and peers in promoting non-violence; and, their perspectives of existing behaviour management policies in school and how these might be improved.

In addition, the research includes the opportunity for pupils to actively participate in the research process and provides them with a framework within which to express their views and opinions. More specifically, the research programme includes the opportunity for pupils to engage in an active consultation process to review and evaluate the use of "*Towards a Non-violent Society: Checkpoints for Young People*", a publication aimed at young people experiencing the transition from primary to secondary school (a sample copy is enclosed).

The programme of research covers key areas in the PSHE KS2 curriculum (see enclosed document), and I am happy to work collaboratively with yourself, your staff and Year 6 pupils to enable the research to be integrated into existing Citizenship and PSHE curriculum activities.

I am enclosing an information leaflet that provides you with further information about the research programme; the aims, what it will involve, the benefits to the school and the pupils, and contact details for further information. I'm also enclosing a copy of "*Checkpoints for Schools*".

Cont/d...

If you have any questions or comments about the research programme I would be delighted to hear from you. My direct line is 020 8392 3278, alternatively my email address in [d.jennifer@rochampton.ac.uk](mailto:d.jennifer@rochampton.ac.uk)

In the meantime, thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely

**Dawn Jennifer**  
**Graduate Assistant**

<http://www.peersupport.com>  
<http://www.savecircle.co.uk>

Enc



APPENDIX H

*School Information Leaflet*

### Benefits to the school

- ♦ Part of a unique research programme;
- ♦ Provides an opportunity to raise awareness for future development in areas such as curriculum, approach and pedagogy, PSHE, classroom environment, home/school links and resources;
- ♦ Complements and supports ongoing practice;
- ♦ Enhances the positive ethos of your school;
- ♦ Results will benefit other schools and the wider community.

### Benefits to pupils

- ♦ Raises awareness and understanding of non-violence;
- ♦ Provides an opportunity to enhance physical and emotional well-being;
- ♦ Creates a dialogue between young people and adults;
- ♦ Provides a framework for young people to participate in creating a safe environment for learning.

### For further information contact

Ms Dawn Jennifer  
 School of Psychology & Therapeutic Studies  
 Roehampton University of Surrey  
 Whitelands College  
 West Hill, London SW15 3SN  
 Tel: 020 8392 3278  
 e: [d.jennifer@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:d.jennifer@roehampton.ac.uk)



## Exploring the Promotion of Non-Violence in Schools

A programme of research being carried out by Dawn Jennifer at  
 Roehampton University of Surrey

Introduction

*“Children have the right to be educated in a safe environment and every member of the school community is equally entitled to that right. Schools are well placed to promote non-violence and encourage everyone to deal with conflict peaceably”* (Varnava, 2000).

Schools play an important part in reducing the risk of children becoming violent. A number of schools are already achieving this by employing interventions to promote non-violence that supplement their behaviour management policies and practices. One such intervention, which is the proposed focus for this research, is *“Towards a Non-Violent Society: Checkpoints for Young People”* (Varnava, 2002), a publication aimed at young people experiencing the transition from primary to secondary school.

Key aims of the study

- ♦ To explore young people’s views and perspectives of psychological and physical violence in their school, their solutions for how it can be addressed, and their views on the roles played by adults and peers in promoting non-violence;
- ♦ To explore young people’s perspectives of existing behaviour management policies in their school and how these might be improved;
- ♦ To involve young people in an active consultation process to review and evaluate the use of *“Checkpoints for Young People”* and to provide recommendations for its future development;
- ♦ To provide young people with an opportunity for actively participating in the research process.

Framework of the research programme

- ♦ Stage One: individual interviews in the autumn term;
- ♦ Stage Two: focus groups in the spring term;
- ♦ Stage Three: activity day in the summer term;
- ♦ Stage Four: feedback and report of the results to participants and schools.

What will it involve?

- ♦ Seeking informed consent from both the school and the young people;
- ♦ Seeking permission from parents/carers for their child to be approached to participate in the study;
- ♦ Launch session: an introduction to the research programme;
- ♦ Individual interviews lasting approximately 20 minutes each with young people from Year 6 and Year 7;
- ♦ Focus groups with 5/6 young people lasting approximately one hour each;
- ♦ An activity day with the whole class to explore young people’s views about using *“Checkpoints for Young People”*;
- ♦ Ongoing support from the researcher.



APPENDIX I

*KS2 Curriculum Document (National Curriculum, 1999)*

## **Where does the programme of research fit into the National Curriculum?**

*Promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*

### **Key Stage 2**

The programme of research covers key areas in the PSHE Key Stage 2 curriculum. The following highlights specific areas that the programme of research will cover.

#### PSHE Key Stage 2 Non-statutory guidelines

#### **Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities**

1) Pupils should be taught:

- a) to talk and write about their opinions, and explain their views, on issues that affect themselves and society
- b) to recognise their worth as individuals by identifying positive things about themselves...

#### **Preparing to play an active role as citizens**

2) Pupils should be taught:

- a) to research, discuss and debate topical issues, problems and events
- b) why and how rules and laws are made and reinforced, why different rules are needed in different situations and how to take part in making and changing rules
- c) to realise the consequences of antisocial and aggressive behaviours, such as bullying and racism, on individuals and communities
- d) that there are different kinds of responsibilities, rights and duties at home, at school and in the community, and that these can sometimes conflict with each other
- e) to reflect on spiritual, moral, social, and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other people's experiences
- f) to resolve differences by looking at alternatives, making decisions and explaining choices

### **Developing a healthy, safer lifestyle**

3) Pupils should be taught:

- e) to recognise the different risks in different situations and then decide how to behave responsibly, including sensible road use, and judging what kind of physical contact is acceptable or unacceptable
- f) that pressure to behave in an unacceptable or risky way can come from a variety of sources, including people they know, and how to ask for help and use basic techniques for resisting pressure to do wrong
- g) school rules about health and safety...

### **Developing good relationships and respecting differences between people**

4) Pupils should be taught:

- a) that their actions affect themselves and others, to care about other people's feelings and to try to see things from their points of view
- d) to realise the nature and consequences of racism, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours, and how to respond to them and ask for help

### **Breadth of study**

5) During the key stage, pupils should be taught the knowledge, skills and understanding through opportunities to:

- a) take responsibility
- b) feel positive about themselves
- c) participate
- d) make real choices and decisions
- e) meet and talk with people
- f) develop relationships through work and play
- g) consider social and moral dilemmas that they come across in life
- i) prepare for change



APPENDIX J

*KS3 Curriculum Document (National Curriculum, 1999)*

## **Where does the programme of research fit into the National Curriculum?**

*Promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*

### **Key Stage 3**

The programme of research covers key areas in the National Curriculum which schools have statutory responsibility to teach for Citizenship Key Stage 3. It also covers areas in non-statutory areas of the PSHE Key Stage 3 curriculum.

The following highlights specifically the areas that the programme of research will cover in relation to Citizenship and PSHE.

#### Citizenship Key Stage 3 Statutory Guidelines

#### **Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens**

1) Pupils should be taught about:

g) the importance of resolving conflict fairly.

Developing skills of enquiry and communication

2) Pupils should be taught to:

c) contribute to group and exploratory class discussion, and take part in debates.

#### **Developing skills of participation and responsible action**

3) Pupils should be taught to:

a) use their imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express and explain views that are not their own

b) negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in both school and community based activities

c) reflect on the process of participating.

PSHE Key Stage 3  
Non-statutory guidelines

**Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities**

- 1) Pupils should be taught:
- b) to respect the differences between people as they develop their own sense of identity
- c) to recognise how others see them, and be able to give and receive constructive feedback and praise
- d) ...how to deal positively with the strength of their feelings in different situations.

**Developing a healthy, safer lifestyle**

- 2) Pupils should be taught:
- d) basic facts and laws, including school rules...
- f) to recognise and manage risk and make safer choices about healthy lifestyles, different environments and travel
- g) to recognise when pressure from others threatens their personal safety and well-being, and to develop effective ways of resisting pressures, including knowing when and where to get help.

**Developing good relationships and respecting differences between people**

- 3) Pupils should be taught:
- a) about the effects of all types of stereotyping, prejudice, bullying, racism and discrimination and how to challenge them assertively
- b) how to empathise with people different from themselves
- c) about the nature of friendship and how to make and keep friends
- i) to negotiate within relationships, recognising that actions have consequences, and when and how to make compromises
- j) to resist pressure to do wrong, to recognise when others need help and how to support them.



**Breadth of study**

5) During the key stage, pupils should be taught the knowledge, skills and understanding through opportunities to:

- a) take responsibility
- b) feel positive about themselves
- c) participate
- d) make real choices and decisions
- e) meet and talk with people
- f) develop relationships through work and play
- g) consider social and moral dilemmas

APPENDIX K

*Roehampton University Research Participant Consent Form*

RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

*Exploring the Promotion of Non-Violence in Schools: A Participatory Approach*

A research programme aimed at (a) exploring young people’s perspectives of psychological and physical violence in school, their solutions for how it can be addressed, and their views of the roles played by adults and peers in promoting non-violence in school; (b) exploring young people’s perspectives of existing behaviour management policies in their school and how these might be improved; and, (c) involving young people in an active consultation process to review and evaluate the use of “*Towards a Non-Violent Society: Checkpoints for Young People*” and to provide recommendations for its future development.

**Name and status of Investigator:** Dawn Jennifer, Research Student, School of Psychology and Therapeutic Studies

**Consent Statement:**

*I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the researcher and that my identity, and that of the school, will be protected in the publication of any findings.*

School .....

Name of Headteacher.....

Signature .....

Date .....

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation, please raise this with the researcher, or the project supervisor, who is Dr Diane Bray, 020 8392 3627



APPENDIX L

*Draft letter to Parents/Carers for Exploratory Study*

## DRAFT LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to let you know that we have recently been given the opportunity to collaborate with a researcher from Roehampton University of Surrey on a research programme to explore the promotion of non-violence in schools.

The research includes the opportunity for children to actively participate in the research process and provides them with a framework within which to express their views and opinions. More specifically, children will be given the opportunity to engage in an active consultation process to review and evaluate the use of "*Towards a Non-violent Society: Checkpoints for Young People*", a publication aimed at young people experiencing the transition from primary to secondary school, and to provide recommendations for its future development. Children will be invited to participate in focus groups to achieve this.

The researcher will work collaboratively with staff and Year 6 children to integrate the study into existing Citizenship and PSHE curriculum activities. The researcher and the school staff will also ensure that children understand the nature of the research and will give them an opportunity to ask any questions that arise. It is planned that as an introductory session to the research, the children will have an opportunity to interview the researcher about her work and the nature of the study during Circle Time.

The data collected will be treated with complete confidentiality. No individual children will be identifiable by the information that they provide. A report of the results will be presented to the school in Spring 2004 and it is hoped that this will make an important contribution to the school's policy development in this area and contribute to enhancing the learning environment for all children.

We will benefit if all Year 6 children take part in the research, and I very much hope that you will give your support. However, participation in the research is voluntary, and if you have any objection to your son or daughter being approached to participate, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

## APPENDIX M

### *Focus Group Instructions for Exploratory Study*



**Focus Group A Instructions**

Hello. Do you remember that my name's Dawn Jennifer and I'm a researcher from the University of Surrey Roehampton and I'm carrying out a study to find out what children think about feeling safe and happy at school. I am interested in what you think and how you feel so there are no right or wrong answers. The information will be used to write a report or a book about the views of children. Anything you say will be confidential – no-one else will know what you have said. The focus group will last for about one hour and you are free to leave the research at any time without giving a reason. Do you mind if I tape the discussion so that I can remember what you said later on?

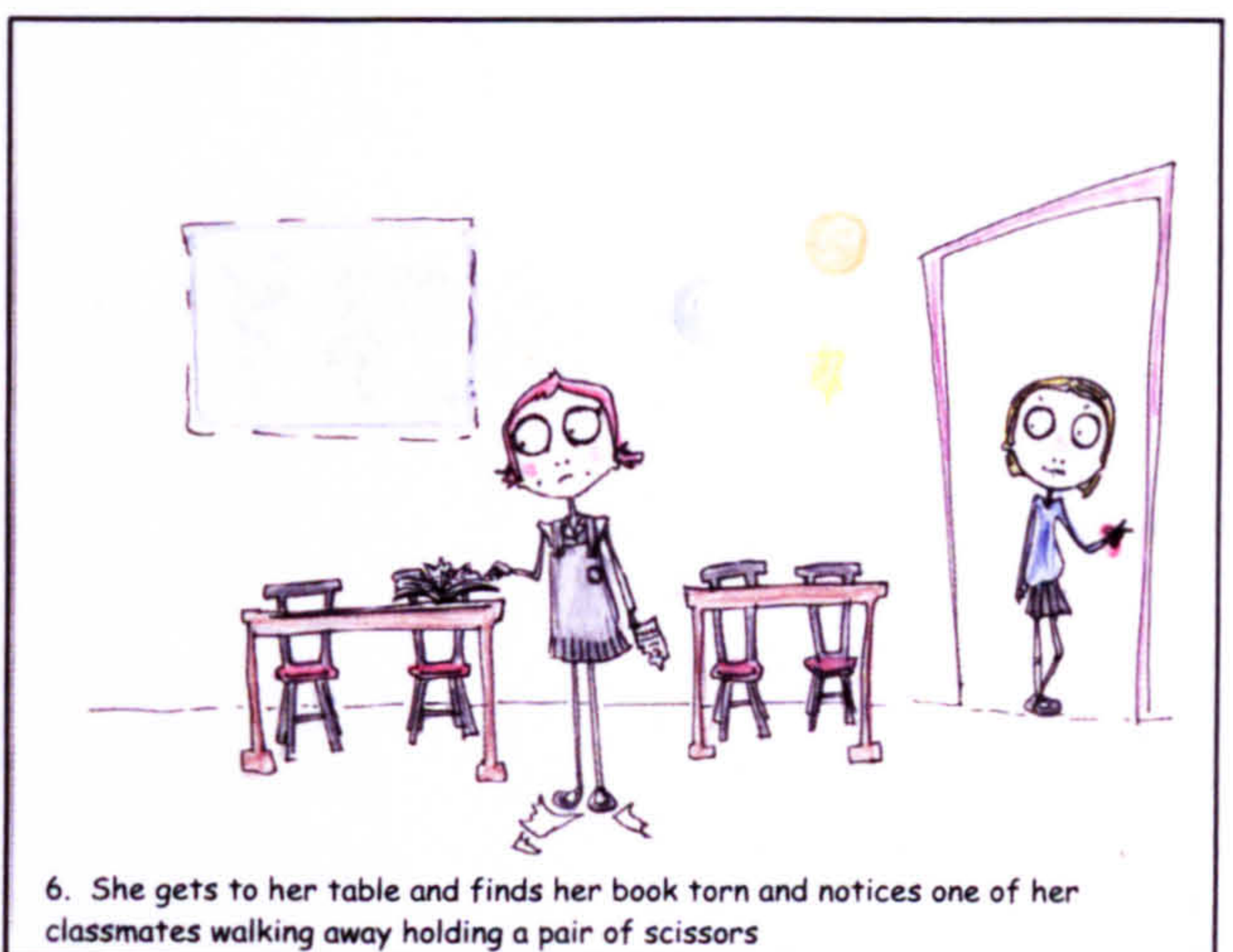
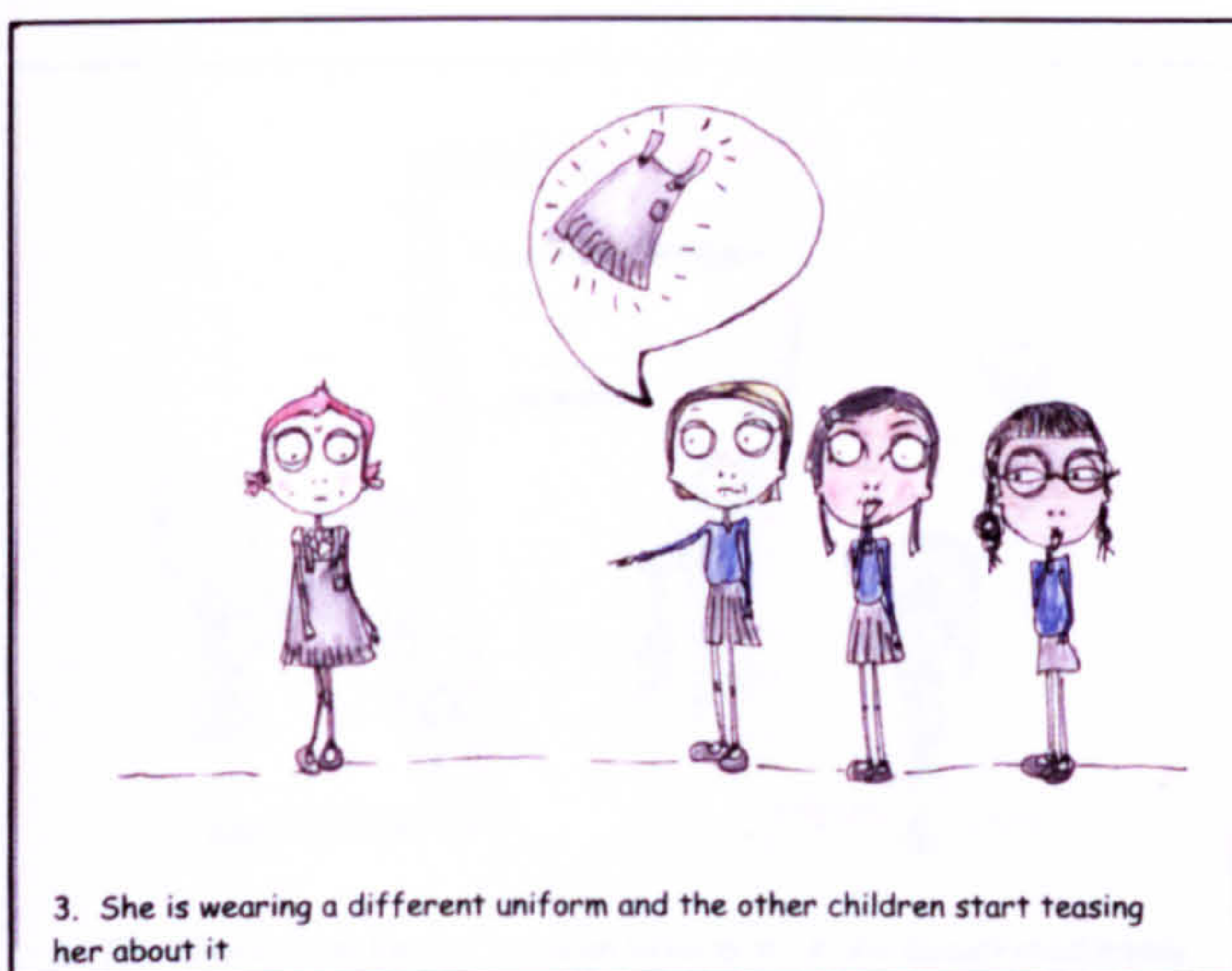
**Focus Group B Instructions**

Hello. Do you remember that my name's Dawn Jennifer and I'm a researcher from the University of Surrey Roehampton and I'm carrying out a study to find out from you what children need to see in an information leaflet to understand about being involved in research. A combination of your ideas will be used to design a leaflet that I can give to other children to explain what taking part in research involves. Anything you say or make will be confidential – no-one else will know what you have said. The focus group will last for about one hour and you are free to leave the research at any time without giving a reason. Do you mind if I tape the discussion so that I can remember what you said later on?

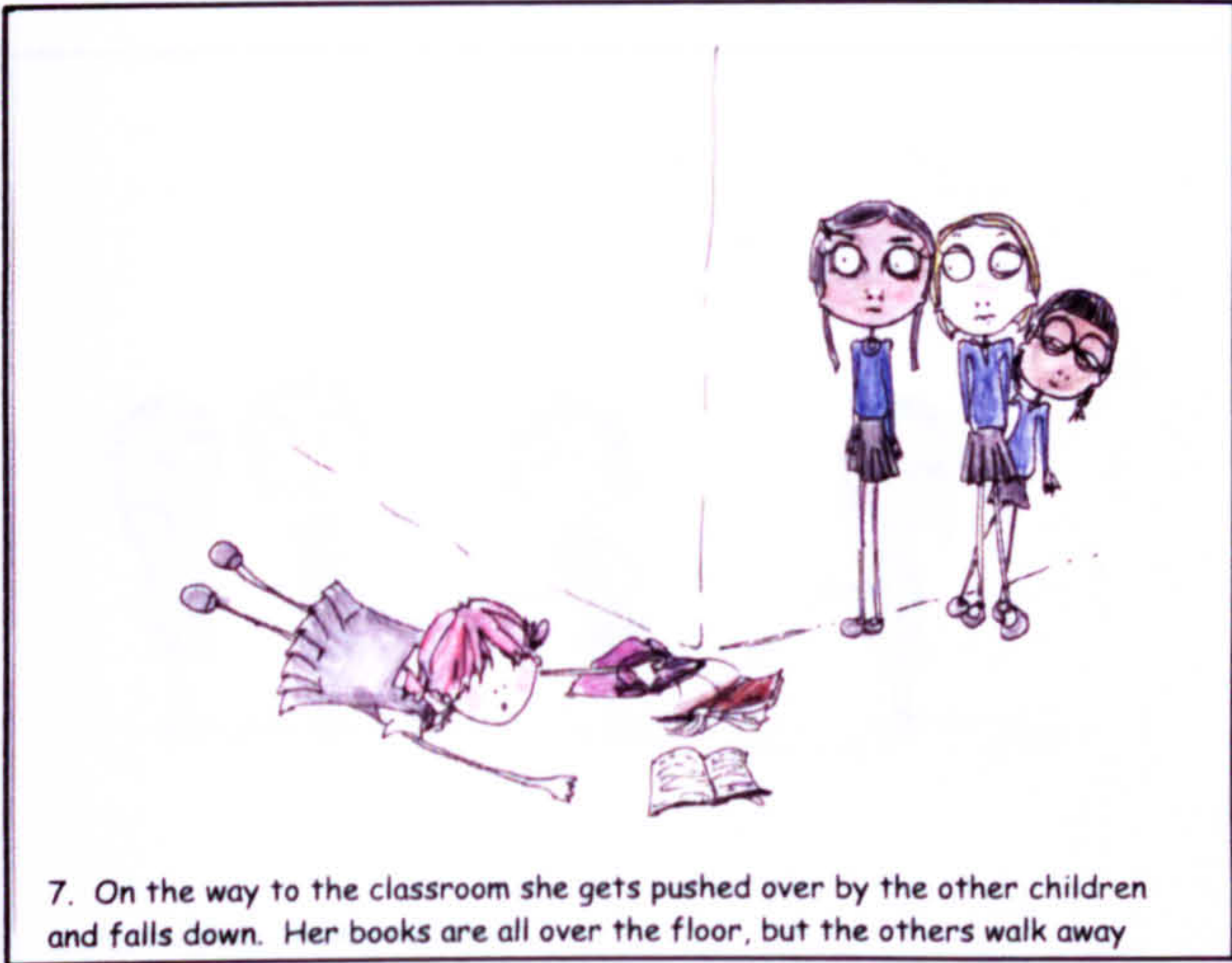
APPENDIX N

*Set of Pictorial Vignettes (adapted from Almeida, del Barrio et al., 2001)*









7. On the way to the classroom she gets pushed over by the other children and falls down. Her books are all over the floor, but the others walk away



8. The other children get together and hold out a cigarette, telling her to smoke



9. The children grab her and threaten to harm her if she doesn't steal money from another child



10. She stands alone behind a tree, away from the playground and from the other children





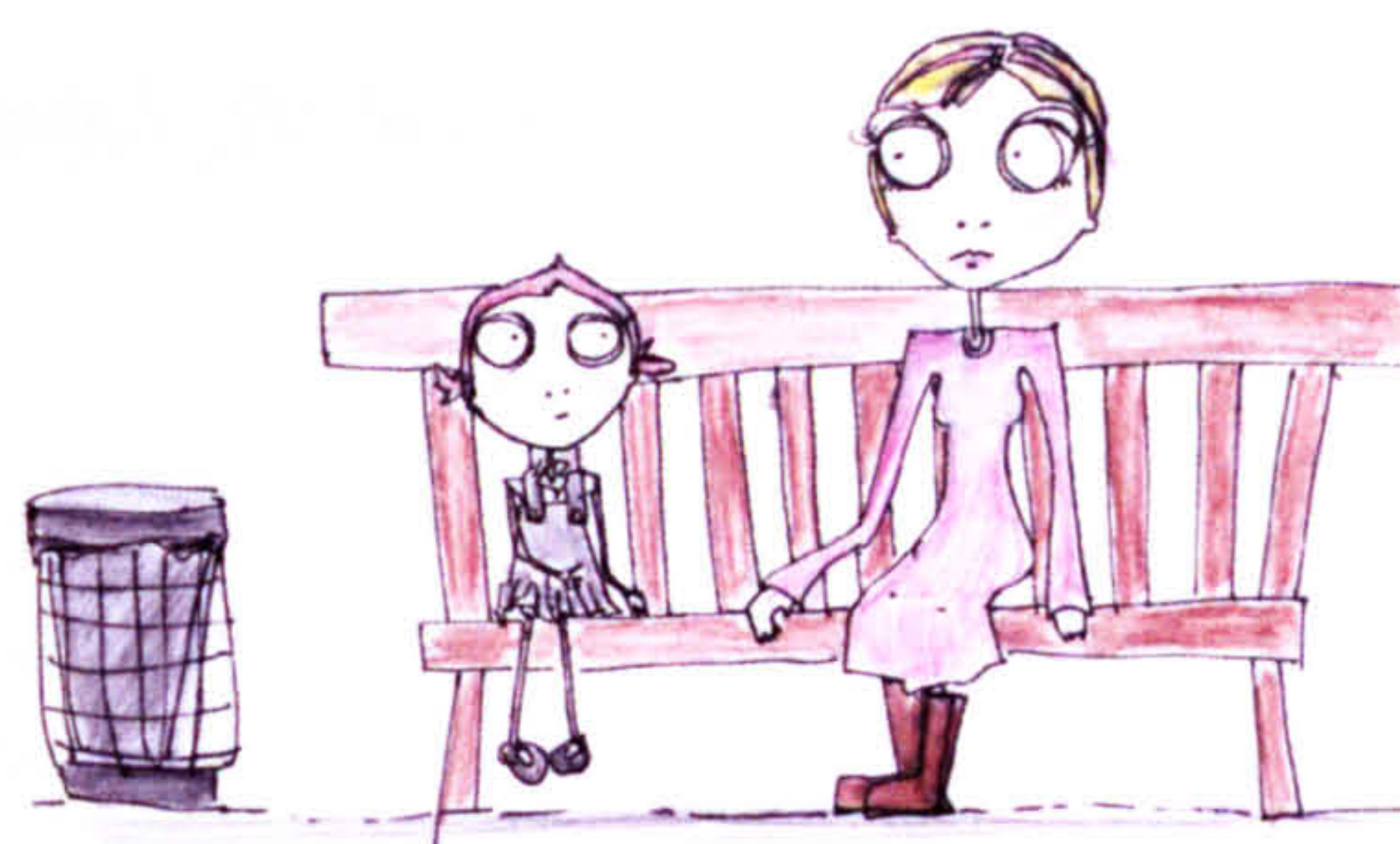
1. All children playing together



2. The girl hides herself behind the tree



3. The girl sits on the wall with another classmate



4. The girl sits on the bench with an adult



## APPENDIX O

### *Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Study 1*



## PROCEDURE

Hello. My name's Dawn Jennifer and I'm a researcher from University of Surrey Roehampton and I'm carrying out a study to find out what children think about friendships in the school. I'm interested in what you think and how you feel, so there are no right or wrong answers to the questions. The information will be used to write a report or a book about the views of children. Anything you say will be confidential – no-one else will know what you have said. The interview will last for about 20 minutes and you are free to leave the research at any time without giving a reason. Do you mind if I tape the interview so that I can remember what you said later on?

I'm going to show you some drawings that tell a story about what happens to a group of children about your age in a school. Please look carefully at each of them. *(Start displaying the drawings one by one, allowing a few seconds interval. Don't comment on the script headings with the child; if the child verbalizes any doubt, avoid any personal interpretation and question what is her/his guess about what might be happening in that particular episode/drawing).*

1. This boy/girl is new to the school and it's his/her first day
2. He/she sees the other children playing a game and wants to join them
3. He/she is wearing a different uniform and the other children start teasing him/her about it
4. The school day is over and when he/she is leaving the classroom, he/she gets blocked by a classmate
5. During playtime, the children get together and grab his/her schoolbag and start pulling out his/her books
6. He/she gets to his/her table and finds his/her book torn and notices one of his/her classmates walking away holding a pair of scissors

7. On the way to the classroom he/she gets pushed over by other children and falls down. His/her books are all over the floor, while the other children walk away
8. The other children get together and hold out a packet of cigarettes telling him/her to smoke
9. The children grab him/her and threaten to harm him/her if he/she doesn't steal money from another child
10. He/she stands alone behind a tree, away from the playground and from the other children

## INTERVIEW

### **A. Narrative and causal attributions**

1. After looking carefully at the drawings, what would you say is happening in the story, from the beginning to the end?
2. What do you think is happening with this boy/girl? (*point to the victim by identifying him/her in two or three different drawings*)
3. And, what about this group of boys/girls, what happens in the group? (*point to the group in two or three different drawings*)
4. In your opinion, why do these kind of things happen in the school? (this question might be reformulated, eg. "when these type of things/situations happen what reasons can explain them?")
5. Do you think that something might have happened before, that could have caused this to happen?

### **B. General emotions**

1. In your opinion, how do you think this boy/girl (*pointing to the victim*) is feeling? Why?
2. What would you feel if it were you? Why?
3. In your opinion, how do you think this boy/girl (*pointing to the aggressor*) is feeling? Why?

4. What would you feel if it were you? Why?
5. In your opinion, how do you think this boy/girl (*pointing to the bystander*) is feeling? Why?
6. What would you feel if it were you? Why?

### **C. Self-Conscious Emotions**

**GUILT** - One child (boy/girl) might say that he felt very worried for what has happened in this story.

1. Can anyone in this story feel very worried. Why? (*the child should be able to identify one or more characters in the story that feel guilt, without any interference from the interviewer*)
2. In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more worried. Why?
3. Is there anyone else who might be feeling worried too? Why?
4. And if you were one of these boys/girls could you also feel worried? (*pointing to the victim/aggressor/bystanders*). Why? (*Prompt if necessary if the child reasons about possible roles*).

**SHAME** - Another child (boy/girl) might say that he felt ashamed for what has happened in this story.

1. Can anyone in this story feel ashamed? Why?
2. In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more ashamed? Why?
3. Is there anyone else who might be feeling ashamed too? Why?
4. And if you were one of these boys or girls could you also feel ashamed? (*pointing to the victim/aggressor/bystanders*). Why? (*Prompt if necessary if the child reasons about possible roles*).

**INDIFFERENCE (I.E., APATHY)** - Another child might say that he would feel ok/wouldn't care for what has been done.

1. Can anyone in this story feel OK/indifferent? Why?
2. In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more indifferent? Why?



3. Is there anyone else in this story who might feel indifferent too? Why?
4. And if you were one of these boys/girls could you also feel indifferent?  
*(pointing to the victim/aggressor/bystanders). Why? (Prompt if necessary if the child reasons about possible roles).*

**PRIDE** - Another child might say that he would feel proud/great for what has been done.

1. Can anyone in this story feel proud? Why?
2. In which of these situations can he/she be feeling more proud? Why?
3. Is there anyone else who might be feeling proud too? Why?
4. And if you were one of these boys/girls could you also feel proud?  
*(pointing to the victim/aggressor/bystanders) Why? (Prompt if necessary if the child reasons about possible roles).*

#### **D. COPING STRATEGIES**

**Questions pertain to the all story.**

1. If you were this boy/girl *(pointing to the victim)*, what would you do to change this situation?
2. If you were this boy/girl what could you think or say to make yourself feel better?

#### **E. ENDING QUESTION**

1. How do you think this story will probably end?  
*(Present the child the four options counterbalancing the order of presentation).*

**Four optional drawings to choose from**

1. All children play together
2. Hiding behind the tree
3. Sitting on a wall communicating with a peer
4. Sitting on a bench communicating with an adult

## APPENDIX P

*Draft Letter to Parents/Carers for Studies 1 and 2*

## DRAFT LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to let you know that we have recently been given the opportunity to collaborate with a researcher from Roehampton University of Surrey on a research programme to explore the promotion of non-violence in schools.

The research includes the opportunity for pupils to actively participate in the research process and provides them with a framework within which to express their views and opinions. More specifically, pupils will be given the opportunity to explore their perspectives of psychological and physical violence at school, their solutions for how it can be addressed, and their views on the roles played by adults and peers in promoting non-violence; and, to explore their perspectives of existing behaviour management policies in school and how these might be improved. In addition, the study includes the opportunity for pupils to engage in an active consultation process to review and evaluate the use of *“Towards a Non-violent Society: Checkpoints for Young People”*, a publication aimed at young people experiencing the transition from primary to secondary school, and to provide recommendations for its future development.

The researcher will work collaboratively with staff and Year 6 pupils to integrate the study into existing Citizenship and PSHE curriculum activities. It is planned that the research will fall into three parts across the coming academic year:

1. In the autumn term, Year 6 pupils will be invited to participate in individual interviews;
2. In the spring term, Year 6 pupils will be invited to participate in focus groups;
3. In the summer term, Year 6 pupils will be invited to participate in an activity day.

The data collected will be treated with complete confidentiality. No individual pupils will be identifiable by the information that they provide. The researcher and the school staff will also ensure that pupils understand the nature of the research and will give them an opportunity to ask any questions that arise.

A report of the results will be presented to the school in Autumn 2005 and it is hoped that this will make an important contribution to the school's policy development in this area and contribute to enhancing the learning environment for all children.



We will benefit if all Year 6 pupils take part in the research programme, and I very much hope that you will give your support. However, participation in the research is voluntary, and if you have any objection to your son or daughter being approached to participate, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

**HEADTEACHER**

## APPENDIX Q

### *Focus Group Instructions for Study 2*

Hello. Do you remember that my name's Dawn Jennifer and I'm a researcher from University of Surrey Roehampton and I'm carrying out a study to find out what children think about friendships in the school. I'm interested in what you think and how you feel so there are no right or wrong answers to the questions. The information will be used to write a report or a book about the views of children. Anything you say will be confidential – no-one else will know what you have said. The discussion group will last for about one hour and you are free to leave the research at any time without giving a reason. Do you mind if I tape the discussion so that I can remember what you said later on?



## APPENDIX R

### *Certificate of Participation*



# Certificate Award

from



This is to certify that

.....

has participated in a discussion group for the  
Feeling Safe and Happy at School:  
listening to children research



Signed: ..... Date: .....



## APPENDIX S

### *Annie's Interview Transcript*



## ANNIE'S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT<sup>1</sup>

I I'm going to show you some drawings that tell you about a group of children in a school about your age and I want you to have a jolly good look at them please. If you need to stand up to get a better look then that's fine. OK so what you think is happening in this story from beginning to end?

**P. They're bullying this girl because she's in a slight way different to other people they seem like in every school you get a bunch of horrible people and they seem like them**

I OK so what do you think's happening to her in no 5 (*attack on personal possessions*)?

P She's getting teased and she's having her things taken off her and just they're being horrible and she doesn't know what to do because she seems like a quiet girl 'cos she's not doing anything about it

I OK and what's happening to her in no 9 (*blackmail*)?

P They're cutting her hair off they're trying to get her to steal money just like and it seems to me they can't be bothered to do anything by themselves so they started

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<sup>1</sup>KEY:  
 SELF = UPPERCASE  
Response = Underlining  
**Justice = Bold Face**

doing this because maybe at the beginning they were nice people, they started doing this because they needed like something and then now they just get pleasure out of it

I Right OK and so in your opinion why might these kinds of things happen in a school?

P 'Cos people are really different because maybe sometimes people just don't like them or they don't fit in or they don't think they're right to be part of the popular group and they just put them into this group that's geeky and then the person who's put in the geeky group they still want to leave them alone and they just carrying on hurting them

I OK and do you think that something might have happened before this to cause this to happen?

P Well, no because it says there she's new to the school and it's just because she didn't know what the uniform was meant to be like so she came like that **and they're just being horrible to her because she's in a slight, very slight, way different**

I Right OK so in your opinion how is this new girl feeling?

P Scared and upset and like an outsider and like she has no-one to talk to

I Mmm OK and what would you feel if you were her?

P I'VE KIND OF BEEN THROUGH IT THAT'S WHY I CHANGED SCHOOLS

I Ah right so you know how it would feel to be that girl. OK can you tell me how it would feel?

P IT FEELS REALLY UPSETTING IT'S REALLY HARD TO GET TO SLEEP AT NIGHT AND YOU JUST FEEL LIKE CRYING ALL THE TIME YOU FEEL LIKE RUNNING AWAY

I Right so she might be feeling like this in the story? OK. And how do you think the bullies are feeling?

P They're just feeling **nothing**. It seems to me they never feel anything they don't feel guilt they don't feel anything

I Why do you think they might not feel anything?

P **Because maybe something's happened in their life when they were younger or maybe they have their parents and they just don't know that that's the wrong thing to do**

I OK and how do you think if you might feel if you were the bully?

P I DON'T THINK THAT I WOULD EVER BE A BULLY THOUGH



I Mmm OK thank you. And how do you think that the ones who are standing by are feeling?

P They're sort of feeling guilty and **they're saying, they're like "what's she doing?"** and there they're looking at her and she's just turned around

I Right

P **And so that's what usually happens one leader and then there're the two other people and then they are just a lot of the time think the things that she does are out of order** and in this one she's watching them and she's always the one that's doing the stuff to her

I No 9 (*blackmail*) one girl's always doing it and the other one's watching. OK. How would you feel if you were the one that's watching?

P I'D BE SORT OF TRYING TO STOP IT AND IF NOT I WOULDN'T BE IN THAT SORT OF GROUP AND I KNOW ONCE YOU GET INTO THOSE GROUPS IT'S REALLY HARD TO GET OUT OF THEM

I Right OK. So you did mention earlier do you think anyone in the story is feeling guilty?

P Mmm I think that one maybe after that because that one there is just yawning and I don't know what she's looking at

I The one in no 9 (*blackmail*) on the right? You think she might be feeling guilty

P I think this one might be feeling guilty after that

I In the smoking one?

P Yeah, but she's just thinking of the money there

I OK so the one with the cigarette in no 8 (*coercion*) is feeling guilty. Why do you think she's feeling guilty?

P Because there she sort of looks worried and that one she's saying nothing. She looks a bit worried there

I OK um do you think there's any situation where she's looking more worried?

P I think maybe in this one and that one, no 5 (*attack on personal possessions*) and no 7 (*group physical attack*)

I No 7 (*group physical attack*) the tall one with the dark hair's looking worried more worried and in no 5 she's looking more worried. OK why do you think she's looking more worried in no 5 (*attack on personal possessions*) and no 7 (*group physical attack*)?

P Well in this one that one's peeking out over her shoulder and she just does sort of look really stiff

I The little one?

P Yeah and in that one she's just standing like that and she's holding something and she's got the rest of her stuff and she's got nothing

I OK so you think she might be worried because she hasn't got anything?

P I think she might be worried I think the reason these two might do something is because they wanna stay in that group 'cos they think it makes them great and everything but really everyone just hates them

I Right OK and so if you were one of these girls do you think you might be feeling worried?

P Well one of these girls?

I Well one of those girls or the new girl

P I THINK IF I WAS THE NEW GIRL I DON'T THINK I'D BE THE NEW GIRL FOR MUCH LONGER

I Right OK thank you. Do you think anyone in the story's feeling ashamed?



P Um not really **I think these two just get barked orders at by her and they're too scared to question it**

I So the blonde one's the main one is she? She's the powerful one?

P There she's like the one who's picking on her and there she's picking on her mostly there she's the one who's cussing her uniform there she's the one who cut her notebook there's she's the one who's cutting her hair and there she's just turned around

I OK so do you think she'd be feeling ashamed of what she's doing?

P No

I No OK if you were one of these girls would you be feeling ashamed?

P YES VERY VERY ASHAMED BECAUSE WE WE'RE ALL DIFFERENT IF THE WORLD WAS ALL THE SAME AND WE WERE ALL THE SAME THEN IT WOULD BE VERY BORING and **they're making fun of her because she's a bit different I mean *they're* different to her but she doesn't question that**

I No OK so do you think anyone in this story's feeling OK about what's happened?

P Her, the blonde one

I The blonde one, OK, why is she feeling OK?

P Because she's the one that's doing it and people who usually get into the habit of doing things like this they just think it's alright to do it 'cos they're powerful and they're popular and they just think it's alright to do stuff like this to them

I OK is there any picture in which she's feeling more OK than another picture?

P Well I think she might be feeling a little bit guilty there that's why she's turned around

I In no 10 (*social isolation*) OK

P A little bit. Um in this one she's just running away and she looks like all cheeky and smirky in that one she looks smirky no 7 (*group physical attack*) and in that one she's just she looks similar to the first one and the second one and in that one she looks quite spiteful

I In no 9 (*blackmail*)?

P Yeah

I OK um if you were one of these girls do you think you could be feeling OK about what's happening?

P No

I No OK um do you think anyone in this story's feeling proud of what they've done?

P Her because she gets pleasure I think out of doing this to people it's just some people get pleasure out of hurting other people AND IN MY SCHOOL IN MY OLD SCHOOL AND MY BROTHER'S SCHOOL THAT WAS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS IT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN US

I Right OK. Is there anyone else that could be feeling proud?

P No I don't think so

I OK could you be feeling proud if you were any of these girls?

P NO 'COS I WOULDN'T I'D PROBABLY IF I WAS SOMEONE IN THIS STORY THAT WOULD BE ME

I You'd be the new girl?

P Yes

I Right OK. So if you were this new girl in this story what would you do to change the situation?



P WELL I WOULDN'T BE SO SHY ABOUT IT, I WOULDN'T LET THEM PUSH ME AROUND, I'D SORT OF IF THEY WERE BEING CHEEKY TO ME I'D BE CHEEKY BACK BECAUSE IF THEY WERE TELLING ME TO SMOKE 'WHY DON'T YOU...?' AND STUFF LIKE THAT, AND IN THIS PICTURE I WOULDN'T JUST GO AND HIDE I MIGHT RUN AWAY BUT I WOULDN'T RUN AWAY BEHIND A TREE I'D PROBABLY RUN AWAY TO THE TEACHER AND TELL HER

I Right OK. So you'd tell a teacher? OK and what would you think or say to yourself to make yourself feel better about the situation?

P WHEN YOU'RE IN A SITUATION LIKE THAT THERE'S NOTHING THAT YOU CAN THAT CAN MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER YOU JUST YOU TRY AND MAKE YOURSELF FEEL BETTER BUT THERE'S *NOTHING* THAT CAN MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER AT ALL

I OK thank you. *Shows endings.*

P That one (*points to optimistic ending*) would never happen because once someone's turned against you like that it's hard to get it's almost impossible to get them to like you so that one wouldn't happen. That one would be nice to happen but I think the most likely would be that one (*points to pessimistic ending*) or it might this (*points to peer social support ending*) no 2 (*pessimistic ending*) then no 3 (*peer*

*social support ending*) because it might be that girl finds her sitting behind the tree  
and then she comes and takes her onto the wall

I OK so no 2 (*pessimistic ending*) is the most probable ending but there's a  
possibility that no 3 (*peer social support ending*) would happen as well?

P After no 2 (*pessimistic ending*)

I After no 2 (*pessimistic ending*). OK thank you very much.

APPENDIX T

*Annie's Interview Summary Worksheet*



## ANNIE'S ACCOUNT

### *Reading 1: Understanding the Story*

#### *The Story*

“They’re bullying this girl because she’s in a slight way different to other people, they seem like, in every school you get a bunch of horrible people and they seem like them...she’s getting teased and she’s having her things taken off her and just, they’re being horrible and she doesn’t know what to do because she seems like a quiet girl ‘cos she’s not doing anything about it...they’re cutting her hair off, they’re trying to get her to steal money just like, and it seems to me they can’t be bothered to do anything by themselves so they started doing this because maybe at the beginning they were nice people, they started doing this because they needed like something and then now they just get pleasure out of it... they’re bullying this girl because she’s in a slight way different to other people...’cos people are really different, because maybe sometimes people just don’t like them or they don’t fit in or they [the bullies] don’t think they’re right to be part of the popular group and they just put them into this group that’s geeky...in every school you get a bunch of horrible people and they [the bullies] seem like them....”.

#### *Relationships*

In this reading, Annie describes the peer relationship portrayed in the hypothetical story in terms of a bullying relationship, characterizing the aggressive behaviours depicted as bullying behaviour. She mentions that the blonde girl is the main bully, assisted by the tall dark girl and the short girl.

### *Repeated Themes*

#### *Difference.*

“They’re bullying this girl because she’s in a slight way different to the other people...”.

“...it’s just because she didn’t know what the uniform was meant to be like so she came like that and they’re just being horrible to her because she’s in a slight, very slight, way different”.

“...we, we’re all different if the world was all the same and we were all the same then it would be very boring and they’re making fun of her because she’s a bit different, I mean **they**’re different to her but she doesn’t question that”.

#### *Peer group dynamics.*

“...in every school you get a bunch of horrible people and they seem like them”.

“...it seems to me they can’t be bothered to do anything by themselves so they started doing this because maybe at the beginning they were nice people, they started doing this because they needed like something...”.

“‘Cos people are really different because maybe sometimes people just don’t like them or they don’t fit in or they don’t think they’re right to be part of the popular group and they just put them into this group that’s geeky and then the person who’s put in the geeky group...they just carrying on hurting them”.

“They’re [assistants] sort of feeling guilty and they’re like ‘what’s she doing?’ and there [no 10], they’re looking at her and she’s just turned around...And so that’s what usually happens one leader and then there’re the two other people and then they

are just a lot of the time think the things that she does are out of order...and she's [blondie] always the one that's doing the stuff to her".

"...and I know once you get into those groups it's really hard to get out of them".

"...I think the reason these two might do something is because they wanna stay in that group 'cos they think it makes them great and everything but really everyone just hates them".

"...I think these two just get barked orders at by her and they're too scared to question it".

"Because she's the one that's doing it and people who usually get into the habit of doing things like this they just think it's alright to do it 'cos they're powerful and they're popular and they just think it's alright to do stuff like this to them".

*Bullying for pleasure.*

"...and then now they just get pleasure out of it".

"...and she looks like all cheeky and smirky in that one she looks smirky number 7 (*group physical attack*)..."

"...because she [bully] gets pleasure I think out of doing this to people, it's just some people get pleasure out of hurting other people..."

*New girl not defending herself.*

"She doesn't know what to do because she seems like a quiet girl 'cos she's not doing anything about it".

"Well, I wouldn't be so shy about it I wouldn't let them push me around..."



### *Moral Reasoning*

New girl feels scared and upset. Self as victim felt upset, couldn't sleep, cried, wanted to run away.

Bullies feel nothing; they don't feel guilt because they don't know that bullying is the wrong thing to do.

Assistant bullies would be feeling guilty.

Assistant bullies believe that the bully's behaviour is wrong.

Short assistant would feel guilty in attack on personal possessions episode.

Tall dark assistant would feel guilty in coercion episode because she looks worried.

Tall dark assistant would feel more worried in attack on personal possessions and group physical attack episodes.

Self stepping into the role of bully would feel ashamed.

Leader bully would feel OK because she is the one that is doing the bullying.

Leader bully would be feeling a bit guilty in the social isolation episode.

Leader bully feels proud and gets pleasure from hurting others.

Self taking the role of the bully could not feel proud.

### *Contradictions*

On the one hand, Annie states that the bullies would feel nothing, not even guilt.

This contrasts with later statements which suggest that the assistant bullies would feel guilt and that the leader bully would feel OK and a bit guilty.

### *Reader Response*

I was moved and humbled by Annie's story. I was also impressed with her articulate expression – she has found a way to explain and understand what happened to her

and is able to apply what she has experienced to this new hypothetical situation. I felt sad to hear her story but also felt grateful that she had given me some very rich data. I felt empathy for her, as I had been a victim of bullying at school and at work. I heard her sense of futility in her remarks – when you’re in a situation like this there’s *nothing* you can do (her emphasis). I remember being a new girl at my primary school and being picked on by older girls. And, now my 8-year-old daughter is being picked on too. My identification of the themes was certainly influenced by my recent reading of the literature. My social position in relation to this participant: adult to child; researcher to pupil; female to female; non-religious to Roman Catholic; victim to victim...how does this influence how I interpret this participant’s narrative? How does the fact that I am using a rights perspective influence how I interpret the data?

*Reading 2: Self and Self in the Role of the New Girl, Bully and Assistant Bully*  
*Self*

“I’ve kind of been through it that’s why I changed schools...In my school, in my old school, and my brother’s school, that was in the last two years, it seems to have been us”.	Self and brother as victims left the school where they were being bullied.
“It feels really upsetting it’s really hard to get to sleep at night and you just feel like crying all the time, you feel like running away”.	Self as victim feels upset. Physical and emotional well-being are affected.

<p>“When you’re in a situation like that there’s nothing that you can, that can make you feel better, you just, you try and make yourself feel better but there’s <i>nothing</i> that can make you feel better at all”.</p>	<p>Self as victim and sense of hopelessness, despair and a lack of options with regard to what you could think or say to yourself to make yourself feel better.</p>
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*Self in the Role of the New Girl*

<p>“I think if I was the new girl I don’t think I’d be the new girl for much longer”.</p>	<p>Not sure what she means by this...reference to changing schools?</p>
<p>“Well, I wouldn’t be so shy about it I wouldn’t let them push me around I’d sort of if they were being cheeky to me I’d be cheeky back because if they were telling me to smoke ‘why don’t you?’ and stuff like that and in this picture I wouldn’t just go and hide I might run away but I wouldn’t run away behind a tree I’d probably run away to the teacher and tell her”.</p>	<p>Shy about it...in contrast to whom? Self in previous school or the new girl portrayed in the drawings? Did she feel pushed around in her old school? Was she cheeky back? Self in the role of new girl would fight back, citing a number of different coping strategies: answering back, running away, telling a teacher. Putting herself in the role of the new girl, the participant would be assertive...was she assertive in her own victimization experience?</p>



*Self in the Role of the Bully*

<p>“I don’t think that I would ever be a bully though”.</p>	<p>In response to the question “how do you think you might feel if you were the bully?” Annie’s reply suggests that she finds it difficult to empathize with the role of the bully.</p>
<p>“Yes [I would feel] very, very ashamed because we we’re all different if the world was all the same and we were all the same then it would be very boring”.</p>	<p>Self in the role of the bully would feel ashamed, in contrast to perceiving that they feel pride and pleasure.</p>
<p>“No, [I couldn’t feel proud] ‘cos I wouldn’t, I’d probably, if I was someone in this story that [new girl] would be me”.</p>	<p>Identifies most strongly with the new girl.</p>

*Self in the Role of the Assistant Bully*

<p>“[If I was the one who was watching] I’d be sort of trying to stop it and if not, I wouldn’t be in that sort of group and, I know once you get into those groups it’s really hard to get out of them”.</p>	<p>Self in the role of assistant would want to intervene but would be aware of the power and influence of the group. Sense of being stuck in the bully group but wanting to get out.</p>
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*Summary Interpretation – Reading for the Self*

With regard to self as victim, Annie’s personal experience of being bullied highlights the physical and emotional consequences of victimization. Her account also draws

attention to her feelings of hopelessness. In contrast, in stepping into the role of the new girl portrayed in the hypothetical story, Annie suggests that she would cope with the bullying more assertively. Does Annie mean that she would be more assertive in the role of the new girl than the drawings portray, or does she mean in comparison with her previous experience as a victim? In contrast to her perception that the bullies would feel pleasure from bullying, Annie’s account of self in the role of the bully suggests that she would feel ashamed for bullying someone who was different. In addition, she has difficulty conceiving of herself as being a bully. In relation to self in the role of assistant, Annie suggests that while she would want to intervene she would be aware of the power and influence of the group, that is, aware of the difficulty of changing friends.

*Reading 3: Reading for Care*

*How would you characterize care?*

“They’re cutting her hair off, they’re trying to get her to steal money, just like, and it seems to me they can’t be bothered to do anything by themselves so they started doing this...and then now they just get pleasure out of it”.	Sense of attachment among the members of the bully group.  Attention drawn to pleasure that bullies get from bullying.
“...because maybe sometimes people just don’t like them or they don’t fit in or they don’t think they’re right to be part of the popular group and they just put	The new girl is turned away, not attended to, cast aside. Sense of detachment/abandonment between members of the bully group and new girl.

them into this group that's geeky and then the person who's put in the geeky group...and they just carrying on hurting them".	
"[Feels] scared and upset and like an outsider and like she has no-one to talk to".	Awareness of the negative effect of the bullying behaviours on the new girl.
"It feels really upsetting it's really hard to get to sleep at night and you just feel like crying all the time you feel like running away".	Attention drawn to the psychological impact of bullying on the new girl.
"I'd be sort of trying to stop it...[if I was watching]".	Response to the need of the victim.
"...I know once you get into those groups it's really hard to get out of them".	Sense of attachment between members of the bully group.
"...I think the reason these two might do something is because they wanna stay in that group 'cos they think it makes them great and everything, but really everyone just hates them".	Sense of attachment and belonging among members of the bully group, even at the expense of being hated by others.
"...she [leader bully] looks like all cheeky and smirky in that one she looks smirky number 7 ( <i>group physical</i>	Attention drawn to the notion of pleasure gained from bullying the new girl.



<i>attack</i> )...and in that one she looks quite spiteful”.	
“Her [the bully is feeling proud] because she gets pleasure I think out of doing this to people it’s just some people get pleasure out of hurting other people...”.	The bully is perceived as enjoying herself while inflicting harm on another.  Attention drawn to the pleasure gained by bullies from bullying others.
“...once someone’s turned against you like that it’s hard to get it’s almost impossible to get them to like you...I think the most likely one [ending] would be that one ( <i>pessimistic</i> ), or it might be this ( <i>peer social support</i> ), Number 2 ( <i>pessimistic</i> ) then Number 3 ( <i>peer social support</i> ) because it might be that girl finds her sitting behind the tree and then she comes and takes her onto the wall”.	The new girl is cast aside; the situation is perceived as irreversible. Sense of isolation/detachment. Followed by rescue from a peer.

*Summary of reading for care.*

Annie describes the nature of the aggressive behaviours depicted in the drawings as bullying behaviour. In particular, she mentions on several occasions the pleasure gained from the bullies from bullying, suggesting a lack of care toward the new girl. This reading stresses Annie’s knowledge of peer relationships and psychological processes in the bullying process, knowledge she suggests is drawn from her personal experience of being victimized. Focusing on care concerns, Annie’s account highlights peer relationships in terms of attachment and detachment both

with reference to the new girl’s disconnection and isolation from her peers, and paradoxically in terms of the sense of connection among members of the bully group. Additionally, Annie’s account highlights the moral dilemma of the assistants in terms of attachment, that is, they participate in bullying because they want to remain connected to the bully group. Annie’s account also focuses on the negative psychological and health effects of the bullying on the new girl and, putting herself in the role of observer, her desire to intervene. Given Annie’s focus on the new girl’s isolation and disconnection, it is not surprising that she selects the pessimistic outcome for the most probably ending to the hypothetical story.

*Reading 4: Reading for Justice*

*How would you characterize justice?*

“They’re bullying this girl because she’s in a slight way different to other people...”.	Attention drawn to unfairness of treatment and taking advantage of inequality.
“Cos people are really different because maybe sometimes people just don’t like them or they don’t fit in or they don’t think they’re right to be part of the popular group and they just put them into this group that’s geeky...”.	Attention drawn to inequality of treatment. “Popular” children treated in one way, “geeky” children treated in another.
“...they’re just being horrible to her because she’s in a slight, very slight, way different”.	Attention drawn to taking advantage of inequality, that is, oppression and domination of someone considered

	different from or unequal to the bullies.
“Because maybe something’s happened in their life when they were younger or maybe they have their parents and they just don’t know that that’s the wrong thing to do”.	Bullies judge that it’s OK to bully other children. They don’t know that it’s wrong.
“...they’re saying, they’re like ‘what’s she doing?’...And so that’s what usually happens one leader and then there’re the two other people and then they are just a lot of the time think the things that she does are out of order...”.	Assistants concerned with the bully’s violations of morally acceptable standards of behaviour.
“...I think the reason these two might do something is because they wanna stay in that group ‘cos they think it makes them great and everything but really everyone just hates them”.	Sense of power of being a member of the bully group.
“...I think these two just get barked orders at by her and they’re too scared to question it”.	Sense that maybe the assistants judge that what the bully is doing is wrong, but they remain silent. They can remain attached to the group by remaining silent and resisting detachment.
“...they’re making fun of her because she’s a bit different I mean <i>they’re</i>	Attention drawn to taking advantage of inequality, that is, oppression and



different to them but she doesn't question that".	domination of someone considered different from or unequal to the bullies.
"[The blonde one's feeling OK] Because she's the one that's doing it and people who usually get into the habit of doing things like this they just think it's alright to do it 'cos they're powerful and they're popular and they just think it's alright to do stuff like this to them".	The bully's sense of power and popularity, the bully judges that it is morally OK to inflict such behaviour on others. What is the payback? Power, popularity, pleasure.
"...if they were being cheeky to me I'd be cheeky back because if they were telling me to smoke 'why don't you?' and stuff like that...".	Sense of retaliation and fairness of treatment.

*Summary of reading for justice.*

From a justice perspective, Annie considers it unfair that “geeky” children are treated differently to “popular” children. She also considers that the bullies have violated an unspoken, yet conventional norm of behaviour, that is, you do not bully others just because they are different. Although, Annie perceives that the leader bully participates in such behaviour because she is powerful and popular, she suggests that the bully is unaware that such behaviour is wrong. While the assistants also consider that the bully has violated the moral norms of behaviour, they are afraid to challenge her, as they fear exclusion from the popular group. Annie describes their moral dilemma in terms of awareness that the bully’s behaviour is wrong on the one hand, but choosing to remain silent on the other. Maybe remaining silent enables the

assistant bullies to maintain their relationship with the popular group. Speaking up, on the other hand, may risk exclusion from the bully group. Overall, Annie's moral concerns pertain to not hurting or harming others. However, in taking the role of the new girl she considers that being cheeky to the bullies as a form of coping strategy is justifiable when they have previously been cheeky to the new girl.

*Interpretative Summary: Self in Relation to Justice and Care*

Annie uses moral language to explain and justify the presence of bullying in school, and expresses her account in both justice and care concerns. In her account, Annie describes the negative effects of bullying upon the physical and emotional well-being of the new girl. In reading for care concerns, this awareness of the new girl's psychological and emotional pain explains Annie's desire for the observer in the hypothetical story to intervene. The self-disclosure of her own long-term experience of victimization provides evidence that a care orientation is present in her account. Conversely, evidence for justice concerns is also present. Annie presents a complex understanding of peer group dynamics in terms of what it is about those who bully and their social context that may lead them to engage in aggressive behaviours towards others. In addition, she describes inclusion and exclusion strategies employed by bullies to manipulate the social context as a function of the membership of different peer groups, such as "the popular group" and "the geeky group".

Reading for both care and justice concerns reflects the evidence that the two moral orientations are present in Annie's account and, at times, certain phrases can provide evidence for either perspective. For example, "...because maybe sometimes people just don't like them or they don't fit in or they don't think they're right to be part of

the popular group and they just put them into this group that's geeky..." can refer either to the abandonment of the new girl (care orientation) or to the unfairness of treatment of geeky children as compared with popular children (justice orientation). Furthermore, "...I think the reason these two might do something is because they wanna stay in that group 'cos they think it makes them great and everything but really everyone just hates them" can allude either to a sense of attachment and belonging among members of the bully group (care orientation), or to the sense of power experienced by being a member of the bully group (justice orientation). Reading for care, the reader could assume that these statements reflect Annie's observations of the new girl's experiences of isolation and oppression. Equally, reading for justice, Annie's statements indicate an involved understanding of group membership and social processes within bullying episodes.



APPENDIX U

*Leader Bully Focus Group Discussion Transcript*

TRANSCRIPT – LEADER BULLY<sup>2</sup>

Leader (1/1B)

Busta (1/2B)

Commander/Planner (1/3B)

Leader (2/1B)

Bully Leader (2/2B)

Master (2/3B)

Head Girl (1/1G)

Ringleader (1/2G)

Best Bully (1/3G)

Leader (2/1G)

First Boss/Main Character/Head of the Bully Gang (2/2G)

Leader (2/3G)

The boss (1/1B)

Big, strong (1/1B)

Good talker (1/1B)

He is brave (1/1B)

Bad (1/1B)

Thoughtless (1/1B)

Hard (1/1B)

Bossy (1/1B)

Aggressive and know all boys (1/1B)

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<sup>2</sup> KEY:  
Response = Underlining  
**Justice = Bold Face**

Powerful (1/1B)

Power crazy (1/1B)

Spoilt (1/1B)

Confidence (1/1B)

Horrible (1/1B)

Tough (1/1B)

Cowards normally (1/1B)

Dumb usually (1/1B)

Depressed (1/1B)

Rude (1/1B)

Won't be challenged (1/1B)

He is really bad and want to be cool (1/1B)

Blackmail (1/1B)

**Blames it on his followers (1/1B)**

**They could threaten people to follow them (1/1B)**

**Takes advantage over smaller people (1/1B)**

Angry (1/1B)

Annoyed (1/1B)

Rageful (1/1B)

**Might feel angry because victim has done something to them so they want  
revenge (1/1B)**

Cowardly (1/1B)

They feel safe (1/1B)

**Think they're cool (1/1B)**

**Thinks he is in charge (1/1B)**



**Think they're the best (1/1B)**

**Don't expect people to fight back (1/1B)**

**Usually has trouble at home or school (1/1B)**

**Aggressive – something happens at home and take it out on people at school (1/1B)**

**Might be doing this because of things at home. He might need a social worker (1/1B)**

Need followers (1/1B)

Respected by others (1/1B)

Bad or good (1/1B)

The big bad bully (1/2B)

Unpopular with the lady's a coward (1/2B)

A person how is to exised and sum times he is strong and so he things he is on top? [sic] (1/2B)

Cunning, slippery, cowardly, clever, brutal (1/2B)

Racist (1/2B)

Naughty, angry, strong (1/2B)

Brave (1/2B)

Very popular so he gets all the copycats fight for them (1/2B)

Cranky, mean (1/2B)

Mad (1/2B)

Really horrid and silly at school (1/2B)

**Sad background (1/2B)**

**He got bullied once so he is unhappy (1/2B)**

**Really sad and unhappy now or once before (1/2B)**

**Alcohol. Dey bully coz dey unhappy wit der life (1/2B)**

**A person who has had an unhappy time at home and he wants to wreck on other people (1/2B)**

Someone who people suck up to (1/2B)

Leader (1/3B)

Main act (1/3B)

Mafia leader (1/3B)

Brainy (1/3B)

Strength (1/3B)

Mean ideas (1/3B)

Bully: fighting skills, loud voice, looking evil, peoples hatred, big, evil, threat skills, cool, doesn't care about mum or dad or principles (1/3B)

Telling him to smoke (1/3B)

Doers (1/3B)

Catching him (1/3B)

Making fun of him (1/3B)

Threatening (1/3B)

Good pranks (1/3B)

Threatening (1/3B)

Needs two people to take the blame (1/3B)

Evil (2/1B)

Dumb (because he doesn't pay attention in class) (2/1B)

Spoilt (2/1B)

Wicked (2/1B)

Big headed (2/1B)

Bossy (2/1B)

Selfish (2/1B)

Biggest bully (2/1B)

Strongest (2/1B)

Cusses people (2/1B)

Starts fights (2/1B)

He does evil deeds (2/1B)

Steals dinner money (2/1B)

Fight people (2/1B)

Trips people up (2/1B)

Steals things from people's backpacks (2/1B)

**Tells other people what to do (2/1B)**

**He thinks he's big man (2/1B)**

**Thinks he's king (2/1B)**

**He thinks he is a leader (2/1B)**

Respected (2/1B)

Everybody follows (2/1B)

Selfish bully leader (2/2B)

Selfish (2/2B)

Big boss, all big (2/2B)

He is very selfish and he smokes (2/2B)

He makes people upset (2/2B)

Causes abuses (2/2B)

Steal money (2/2B)

Bullied another children (2/2B)



Steal another books (2/2B)

Acts rude and hurts them (2/2B)

**Someone who leads a gang, shows off, bullies** (2/2B)

**Starts trouble thinks all bad gangster** (2/2B)

**Disobeys rules and don't wear uniform** (2/2B)

**Leads the bully gang** (2/2B)

**Horrible and in charge** (2/2B)

Proud (2/2B)

Enjoys bullying others to make himself feel big (2/2B)

Big on outside but scared on inside (2/2B)

He doesn't care (2/2B)

**Thinks he is a big hard man by bullying the new people** (2/2B)

**Thinks that they're all smart and cool** (2/2B)

**Gets a bad life at home and takes it out on other people** (2/2B)

**Not having a good life at home** (2/2B)

Bully needs back-up (2/2B)

Needs to have friends to feel safe (2/2B)

Not good bully (2/2B)

Big cheese (2/3B)

Devious (2/3B)

Strong (2/3B)

Big mouth (2/3B)

Idiotic (2/3B)

Control (2/3B)

Ugly (2/3B)

Rude (2/3B)

Evil looking (2/3B)

Bossy (2/3B)

Funny in a horrible way (2/3B)

Loud (2/3B)

Big cheese (2/3B)

All mouth no action (2/3B)

Threatening (2/3B)

Bully (2/3B)

Shouts at them (2/3B)

Does fierce actions (2/3B)

**Bosses them about (2/3B)**

Strong so other people follow him (2/3B)

**A head girl is someone who bosses everyone about (1/1G)**

**The head girl is bossy and makes people do things for her (1/1G)**

**The head girl tells everyone to do things but she just stands there watching and laughing (1/1G)**

**The head girl: watches and laughs; makes other people do the things she doesn't want to do (1/1G)**

**She makes the other two do things to the girl who is being bullied (1/1G)**

**She could boss the other bullies around and make them be mean to the girl (1/1G)**

**A head girl makes all people in her gang frightened of her so they will do whatever she wants them to (1/1G)**

The head girl isn't always around so if a teacher came the head girl wouldn't get told off (1/1G)

The head girl kind of ignores the small girl (1/1G)

**The head girl is completely in control (1/1G)**

**A head girl is someone who is bossy and always thinks she's in control (1/1G)**

**The head girl might have been bullied before and she wants to show other people what it feels like (1/1G)**

The head girl might have bullied the other two and then they became one big bullying group (1/1G)

The head girl might have bullied the other two and now they want to be friends with her (1/1G)

The slave and the tagger might not like the head girl. But they stay with her to look cool. And not get bullied (1/1G)

**A head girl is someone who people are frightened of (1/1G)**

Uncaring (1/2G)

Friendless (1/2G)

Cruel (1/2G)

Inconsiderate (1/2G)

Mean (1/2G)

Ugly (1/2G)

Forceful (1/2G)

Evil (1/2G)

Cool (but not really!) (1/2G)

Mocking (1/2G)

Bossy (1/2G)



Sly (1/2G)

Sneaky (1/2G)

Unfriendly (1/2G)

(Like) Saddam Hussain, Adolf Hitler, Mussolini, Adolf Hitler (1/2G)

Popular – strict with popular people to become popular (1/2G)

Mean – bad, sets bad example (1/2G)

Spoilt (1/2G)

Ruthless (1/2G)

Arrogant, aggressive, threatening (1/2G)

Ruthless, hard, nasty, cruel (1/2G)

Dictator (1/2G)

Fakes (1/2G)

Like a chameleon changing colours (1/2G)

Controlling (1/2G)

Starts bad examples (1/2G)

Threatening (1/2G)

**Bully people who are known as geeks or boffins (1/2G)**

**Pick on people is they are different *as I am!!!!* (1/2G)**

**Bossy – tells people what to do (1/2G)**

Love themselves (1/2G)

**Scared of being found out (1/2G)**

**Troubled background (1/2G)**

**Troubled (at home?) (1/2G)**

Treated like royalty (1/2G)

A title for the blonde girl – bully girl and to be cool (1/3G)

Main bully (1/3G)

Naughty (1/3G)

Popular girl (1/3G)

Meanest (1/3G)

Bossy (1/3G)

Tough (1/3G)

Cool girl (1/3G)

The blonde one looks mean (1/3G)

**The best bully might be really popular and bullies people because she knows she is better than them (1/3G)**

**Bullying the other two around (1/3G)**

**She might be ordering the other two about and forcing them to do things (1/3G)**

“Look at me” “Ha ha!” “I’ve got your book” (1/3G)

She might think other people think she is cool if she bullies people (1/3G)

She bullies because she’s lonely (1/3G)

A little lonely and if she is popular other people would want to be her friend and she makes them bully other people (1/3G)

Lots of friends because they don’t want her to bully them (1/3G)

She might think everyone’s actually her friends but they just don’t want her to bully them (1/3G)

The bully gave the new girl a cigar, which is bad (2/1G)

**The tall girl is threatening the girl who is getting bullied to smoke a cigarette (2/1G)**

**She’s tall and she looks like she tells everyone what to do (2/1G)**

**She is doing all the bad stuff and the other two girls aren't really doing nothing**  
(2/1G)

**Always in front and she always has ideas** (2/1G)

Tall one is lonely and wanted to be respected for once (2/1G)

I think people only be bullies' friends so they don't get bullied!!! (2/1G)

People hang around a bully so they don't get bullied (2/1G)

I think the bully has two bully friends (2/1G)

She is a bullying get a friend (2/1G)

Because she smokes things. I don't like bullies and it horrible. The leader is the  
bully! (2/1G)

I think she the biggest one (2/1G)

The head of them all (2/2G)

The leader (2/2G)

The head of the bully gang (2/2G)

Ignorant! (2/2G)

Greedy! (2/2G)

Selfish! (2/2G)

Grinning and smirking! (2/2G)

Sneaky! (2/2G)

Rude (2/2G)

Leaving her out (2/2G)

Don't want to sit with her (2/2G)

**Powerful** (2/2G)

**Feeling powerful!!!!** (2/2G)

**Feeling that she is the boss** (2/2G)



Feeling proud of herself (2/2G)

Feeling...ok!!! (2/2G)

Happy what she is doing to Sophie [victim] (2/2G)

**Thinking she is the boss!** (2/2G)

**Thinking 'I don't want her in the school!'** (2/2G)

**She's in charge!** (2/2G)

**She thinks she can push Sophie [victim] about** (2/2G)

Attitude (2/3G)

Cool (2/3G)

Brave (2/3G)

Mad (2/3G)

Quick temper (2/3G)

Cusses (2/3G)

**Most bullies say, "if you tell anyone that I have been bullying you then I will**

**beat you up". Like threatening them** (2/3G)

**Most bullies say if you don't be my friend I will beat you up** (2/3G)

Cusses your clothes (2/3G)

Rude words (2/3G)

Makes the bully feel proud of themselves (2/3G)

**Makes them feel in charge and big inside** (2/3G)

Anger (2/3G)

Jealous of new girl (2/3G)

Jealous (2/3G)

Makes you feel happy (2/3G)

**Think they are strong** (2/3G)

Think it is fun (2/3G)

Think they are the coolest!!!! (2/3G)

They think it is nice to bully someone (2/3G)

They think it is funny (2/3G)

Need encouragement from others (2/3G)

Need back up (2/3G)

Need rude remarks (2/3G)

Need helpers (2/3G)

Needs friends (2/3G)

Most bully have no friends (2/3G)

Most bullies pay people to be their friends (2/3G)

Crew (2/3G)

Back up (2/3G)

All the other girls are bullying the new girl (2/3G)

Bully for fun or bully when they are angry (2/3G)

APPENDIX V

*Leader Bully Focus Group Summary Worksheet*



WORKSHEET – LEADER BULLY PROFILE

Themes

Bully names.

Leader (1/1B)

Busta (1/2B)

Commander/Planner (1/3B)

Leader (2/1B)

Bully Leader (2/2B)

Master (2/3B)

Head Girl (1/1G)

Ringleader (1/2G)

Best Bully (1/3G)

Leader (2/1G)

First Boss/Main Character/Head of the Bully Gang (2/2G)

Leader (2/3G)

Personal qualities.

Unpleasant	Horrible (1/1B); Bad (1/1B); Horrid (1/2B); Mean (1/2B); Mean (1/3B); Looking evil (1/3B); Evil (1/3B); Evil (2/1B); Wicked (2/1B); Ugly (2/3B); Rude (2/3B); Funny in a horrible way (2/3B); Cruel (1/2G); Evil (1/2G); Mean (1/2G); Ugly (1/2G); Mean – bad, sets bad example (1/2G);
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	Ruthless, nasty, cruel (1/2G); Mocking (1/2G); Meanest (1/3G); The blonde one looks mean (1/3G); Grinning and smirking! (2/2G); Quick temper (2/3G)
Strength	Big, strong (1/1B); Hard (1/1B); Powerful (1/1B); Power crazy (1/1B); Tough (1/1B); Brutal (1/2B); Strong (1/2B); Strength (1/3B); Big (1/3B); Loud voice (1/3B); Biggest bully (2/1B); Strongest (2/1B); Strong (2/3B); Big mouth (2/3B); Loud (2/3B); Big cheese (2/3B); Big boss, all big (2/3B); Forceful (1/2G); Hard (1/2G); Bossy (1/2G); Bossy (1/3G); Tough (1/3G)
Thoughtless and indifferent	Thoughtless (1/1B); Spoilt (1/1B); Doesn't care about mum or dad or principles (1/3B); Selfish (2/1B); Spoilt (2/1B); Selfish (2/2B); Uncaring (1/2G); Inconsiderate (1/2G); Unfriendly (1/2G); Spoilt (1/2G); Greedy! (2/2G); Selfish! (2/2G)
Aggressive	Aggressive (1/1B); Rude (1/1B); Angry (1/2B); Cranky (1/2B); Mad (1/2B); Racist (1/2B); Fighting and threat skills (1/3B); Aggressive and threatening (1/2G); Rude (2/2G); Mad (2/3G); Attitude (2/3G)
Popular	Cool (1/1B); Very popular (1/2B); Cool (1/3B); Cool (but not really!) (1/2G); Popular – strict with

	popular people to become popular (1/2G); Popular girl (1/3G); Cool girl (1/3G); Cool (2/3G)
Cunning	Cunning, slippery (1/2B); Devious (2/3B); Sly (1/2G); Sneaky (1/2G); Fakes (1/2G); Like a chameleon changing colours (1/2G); Sneaky! (2/2G)
Disobedient	Naughty (1/2B); Silly (1/2B); Won't be challenged (1/1B); Idiotic (2/3B); Naughty (1/3G)
Authoritarian	Bossy (1/1B); Bossy (2/1B); Bossy (2/3B); Control (2/3B); Controlling (1/2G)
Ignorant	Dumb (1/1B); Dumb (because he doesn't pay attention in class) (2/1B); Ignorant! (2/2G)
Courage	He is brave (1/1B); Confidence (1/1B); Brave (1/2B); Brave (2/3G)
Vanity	Know-all (1/1B); Big headed (2/1B); Arrogant (1/2G)
Cowardice	Cowardly (1/1B); All mouth no action (2/3B)
Alone	Unpopular (1/2B); Friendless (1/2G)
Intelligent	Clever (1/2B); Brainy (1/3B)

*Bullying behaviours.*

Blackmail

Restraining the victim

Making fun

Threatening



Cussing

Fighting and tripping others up

Upsetting others

Hurting others

Being rude

Shouting

Picking on others who are different, geeks or boffins

Social exclusion

Watching and laughing

Ignoring others

Coercion

*Moral reasoning.*

Angry, annoyed, rageful, cowardly (1/1B)

Might feel angry because victim has done something to them so they want revenge!

(1/1B)

Proud (2/2B)

Enjoys bullying others to make himself feel big...Big on outside but scared on inside

(2/2B)

He doesn't care (2/2B)

Scared of being found out (1/2G)

Feeling...OK!!! (2/2G)

Powerful...Feeling proud of herself (2/2G)

Makes the bully feel proud of themselves...Makes them feel in charge and big inside

(2/3G)

Bully for fun or bully when they are angry (2/3G)

Anger...Jealous of the new girl (2/3G)

*Reading 1: Reading for Care*

They feel safe (1/1B)	Sense that the bully offers safety to the assistant bullies
Need followers (1/1B)	Sense that the bully needs connections with others
Someone who people suck up to (1/2B)	Notion that the bully is someone that others want to be connected with
Needs two people to take the blame (1/3B)	Sense that bully need connection with others in terms of taking the blame
Everybody follows (2/1B)	Notion that the bully is someone that others want to be connected with
He makes people upset...acts rude and hurts them (2/2B)	Attention drawn to the hurt, pain and suffering caused by bullying
Enjoys bullying others to make himself feel big (2/2B)	Notion that bully gets pleasure from bullying others
He doesn't care (2/2B)	Sense of a lack of care toward victim
Bully needs back-up...needs to have friends to feel safe (2/2B)	Notion that attachments to others offers the bully safety and support
Strong so other people follow him (2/3B)	Bully perceived as strong so others will follow. Do others follow because he is perceived as strong, or is he strong

	because others follow?
The head girl tells everyone to do things but she just stands there watching and laughing...the head girl: watches and laughs (1/1G)	Attention drawn to the notion that the bully gains pleasure from bullying others
The head girl isn't always around so if a teacher came the head girl wouldn't get told off (1/1G)	Detaching herself from the bullying offers her protection from the consequences
The head girl might have bullied the other two and then they became one big bullying group...the head girl might have bullied the other two and now they want to be friends with her...the slave and the tagger might not like the head girl. But they stay with her to...not get bullied (1/1G)	Suggestion that the bully's connections with other members of the bully group are founded upon her previous bullying of them and their belief that friendship with her will protect them from further victimization
Look at me. Ha ha! I've got your book (1/3G)	Notion that bully gets pleasure from bullying others
She bullies because she's lonely (1/3G)	Sense that lack of attachments and connections motivates the bully to aggress
A little lonely and if she is popular other people would want to be her friend and she makes them bully other people	Notion that the bully experiences isolation and implication that bullying others will bring popularity



(1/3G)	
Lots of friends because they don't want her to bully them...she might think everyone's actually her friends but they just don't want her to bully them (1/3G)	Notion that the bully's friendships with others are founded upon their fear of being bullied by her
The bully gave the new girl a cigar, which is bad (2/1G)	Attention drawn to the hurt, pain and suffering caused by bullying
Tall one is lonely and wanted to be respected for once (2/1G)	Sense that bully is isolated and the implication that bullying will provide respect and connection with others
I think people only be bullies' friends so they don't get bullied!!!...people hang around a bully so they don't get bullied...I think the bully has two bully friends...she is a bullying get a friend (2/1G)	Notion that the bully's friendships with others are founded upon their fear of being bullied by her; sense that lack of attachments and connections motivates the bully to aggress
Grinning and smirking! (2/2G)	Notion that bully gains pleasure from bullying others suggesting a lack of care
Feeling...OK!!!...Happy what she is doing to Sophie [victim] (2/2G)	Notion that bully gets pleasure from bullying others
Most bullies say, "if you tell anyone that I have been bullying you then I will beat you up"...Like threatening them...most bullies say if you don't be my friend I	Notion that the bully's friendships with others are founded upon their fear of being bullied by her

will beat you up (2/3G)	
Makes you feel happy (2/3G)	Notion that bully gets pleasure from bullying others
Think it is fun...they think it is nice to bully someone...they think it is funny (2/3G)	Notion that bully gets pleasure from bullying others
Need encouragement from others...need back up...need rude remarks...need helpers...needs friends...most bully have no friends...most bullies pay people to be their friends (2/3G)	Notion that the bully desires connection with others for encouragement; support; assistance and friendship. Sense of bully's isolation
All the other girls are bullying the new girl (2/3G)	Attention drawn to bullying
Bully for fun or bully when they are angry (2/3G)	Attention drawn to notion that the bully gains pleasure from bullying others

### *Summary of reading for care*

Reading for interpersonal relationships from a care perspective draws attention to the hurt, pain and suffering caused by bullying. One group suggests, "He makes people upset...acts rude and hurts them" (2/2B). Furthermore, attention is drawn to the notion that the leader bully gains pleasure from bullying others, suggesting a lack of care toward their targets. For example, one group states "They think it is fun...they think it is nice to bully someone...they think it is funny" (2/3G). Reading for interpersonal relationships from a care perspective highlights the nature of the bully's attachments to others in terms of need. In reading for interpersonal relationships

from a care perspective, male group discussions highlight attachment issues in terms of the bully’s need for followers as a means of providing safety (“Bully needs back-up...needs to have friends to feel safe”, 2/2B) and providing a scapegoat (“Needs two people to take the blame”, 1/3B). On the other hand, reading of the female group discussions draws attention to the notion that the leader bully needs connection with others for support, assistance and friendship, “Need encouragement from others...need back-up...need rude remarks...need helpers...” (2/3G). Furthermore, analysis of the female group discussions draws attention to the bully’s sense of isolation as a motivation to aggress against others, for example, one group said “She bullies because she’s lonely” (1/3G). Conversely, the perception is that distancing herself from the group offers the leader bully protection from the consequences of her behaviour: “The head girl isn’t always around so if a teacher came the head girl [bully] wouldn’t get told off” (1/1G). Furthermore, females perceived that the bully’s friendships with others are founded upon their fear of being bullied by her and the assumption that such an attachment offers them protection against victimization. For example, one group claimed “She might think everyone’s actually her friends but they just don’t want her to bully them” (1/3G). Another stated “I think people only be bullies’ friends so they don’t get bullied!!!” (2/1G).

*Reading 2: Reading for Justice*

Blames it on his followers...they could threaten people to follow them...takes advantage over smaller people (1/1B)	Sense of domination and oppression in terms of blame, threat, and taking advantage
Might feel angry because victim has	Sense of fairness of treatment, that is,



done something to them so they want revenge (1/1B)	bully will reciprocate
Think they're cool...thinks he is in charge...think they're the best...don't expect people to fight back (1/1B)	Thoughts of domination in terms of feeling in charge
Usually has trouble at home or school (1/1B)	Concerned with issues of equality, in terms of avenging a situation of unfairness
Aggressive – something happens at home and take it out on people at school...might be doing this because of things at home. He might need a social worker (1/1B)	Concerned with issues of equality, in terms of avenging a situation of unfairness
Sad background...he got bullied once so he is unhappy...really sad and unhappy now or once before...alcohol, dey bully 'coz dey unhappy wit der life...A person who has had an unhappy time at home and he wants to wreck on other people (1/2B)	Concerned with issues of equality, in terms of avenging a situation of unfairness
Tells other people what to do (2/1B)	Sense of domination in terms of giving orders
He thinks he's big man...thinks he's king...he thinks he is a leader (2/1B)	Thoughts of domination in terms of feeling in charge

Someone who leads a gang, shows off, bullies...starts trouble thinks all bad gangster...disobeys rules and don't wear uniform...leads the bully gang...horrible and in charge (2/2B)	Sense of domination in terms of leading and initiating bullying behaviour
Thinks he is a big hard man by bullying the new people...thinks that they're all smart and cool (2/2B)	Thoughts of domination
Gets a bad life at home and takes it out on other people...not having a good life at home (2/2B)	Concerned with issues of equality, in terms of avenging a situation of unfairness
Bosses them about (2/3B)	Sense of domination in terms of giving orders
A head girl is someone who bosses everyone about...the head girl is bossy and makes people do things for her...the head girl tells everyone to do things...makes other people do the things she doesn't want to do...she makes the other two do things to the girl who is being bullied...she could boss the other bullies around and make them be mean to the girl...a head girl makes all people in her gang frightened of her so they will do	<p>Sense of domination in terms of giving orders and leading</p> <p>Sense of oppression in terms of instilling fear and coercive behaviour</p>

whatever she wants them to...the head girl is completely in control (1/1G)	
A head girl is someone who is bossy and always thinks she's in control (1/1G)	Sense of domination and power
The head girl might have been bullied before and she wants to show other people what it feels like (1/1G)	Concerned with issues of equality, in terms of avenging a situation of unfairness
A head girl is someone who people are frightened of (1/1G)	Sense of oppression in terms of instilling fear in others
Bully people who are known as geeks or boffins...pick on people as they are different <u>as I am</u> !!!! (1/2G)	Attention drawn to the notion that the leader bully takes advantage of perceived inequality
Bossy – tells people what to do (1/2G)	Sense of domination in terms of giving orders
Scared of being found out (1/2G)	Fear of consequences and a sense that such behaviour is morally wrong
Troubled background...troubled (at home?) (1/2G)	Concerned with issues of equality, in terms of avenging a situation of unfairness
The best bully might be really popular and bullies people because she knows she is better than them (1/3G)	Attention drawn to sense of power and inequality
Bullying the other two around...she might be ordering the other two about	Sense of domination and oppression in terms of giving orders and coercive



and forcing them to do things (1/3G)	behaviours
The tall girl is threatening the girl who is getting bullied to smoke a cigarette (2/1G)	Attention drawn to the threatening and intimidating nature of the bully behaviour
She's tall and she looks like she tells everyone what to do...she is doing all the bad stuff and the other two girls aren't really doing nothing...always in front and she always has ideas (2/1G)	Sense of domination in terms of giving orders and initiating bullying behaviour
Powerful...feeling powerful!!!!...feeling that she is the boss (2/2G)	Sense of domination in terms of leading
Thinking she is the boss!...thinking 'I don't want her in the school!'...she's in charge!...she thinks she can push Sophie [victim] about (2/2G)	Sense of domination in terms of feeling in charge
Most bullies say, "if you tell anyone that I have been bullying you then I will beat you up". Like threatening them...most bullies say if you don't be my friend I will beat you up (2/3G)	Attention drawn to the threatening and intimidating nature of the bully behaviour
Makes them feel in charge and big inside (2/3G)	Sense of domination in terms of leading
Think they are strong (2/3G)	Sense of domination

*Summary of reading for justice*

In reading for interpersonal relationships from a justice perspective, analysis of the group discussions draws attention to issues of domination, oppression and fairness of treatment. With regard to fairness of treatment, this reading focuses attention upon concerns with issues of equality in terms of rectifying previous unfair treatment that the leader bully has experienced. However, whereas male discussions focused on general unfair treatment experienced at home, for example, perceiving that the leader bully “Gets a bad life at home and takes it out on other people” (2/2B), females focused on unfair treatment in terms of the bully’s previous experience of being bullied. For example, one female group suggested that the leader bully “might have been bullied before and she wants to show other people what it feels like” (1/1G). The group discussions, however, primarily focused on issues of domination, that is, on the bully’s sense of power and authority in terms of leader-like behaviour such as taking control, giving orders and initiating bullying behaviour. One male group defined a leader bully as “Someone who leads a gang, shows off, bullies...starts trouble...and in charge” (2/2B). A female group suggested that a leader bully is “...someone who bosses everyone about...and makes people do things for her...makes other people do the things she doesn’t want to do...is completely in control” (1/1G). Indeed, one female group discussion suggests an awareness that the leader bully takes advantage of perceived inequality stating “Bully people who are known as geeks or boffins...pick on people as they are different as I am!!!!” (1/2G). In terms of oppression, analysis of the focus group discussions draws attention to the coercive nature of the leader bully’s behaviour. One female group stated that the leader bully “...makes all the people in her gang frightened of her so they will do whatever she wants them to” (1/1G). Attention is also drawn to the threatening and

intimidating nature of the bully's behaviour. For example, one female group claimed "Most bullies say 'if you tell anyone that I have been bullying you then I will beat you up'. Like threatening them...most bullies say 'if you don't be my friend I will beat you up'" (2/3G).